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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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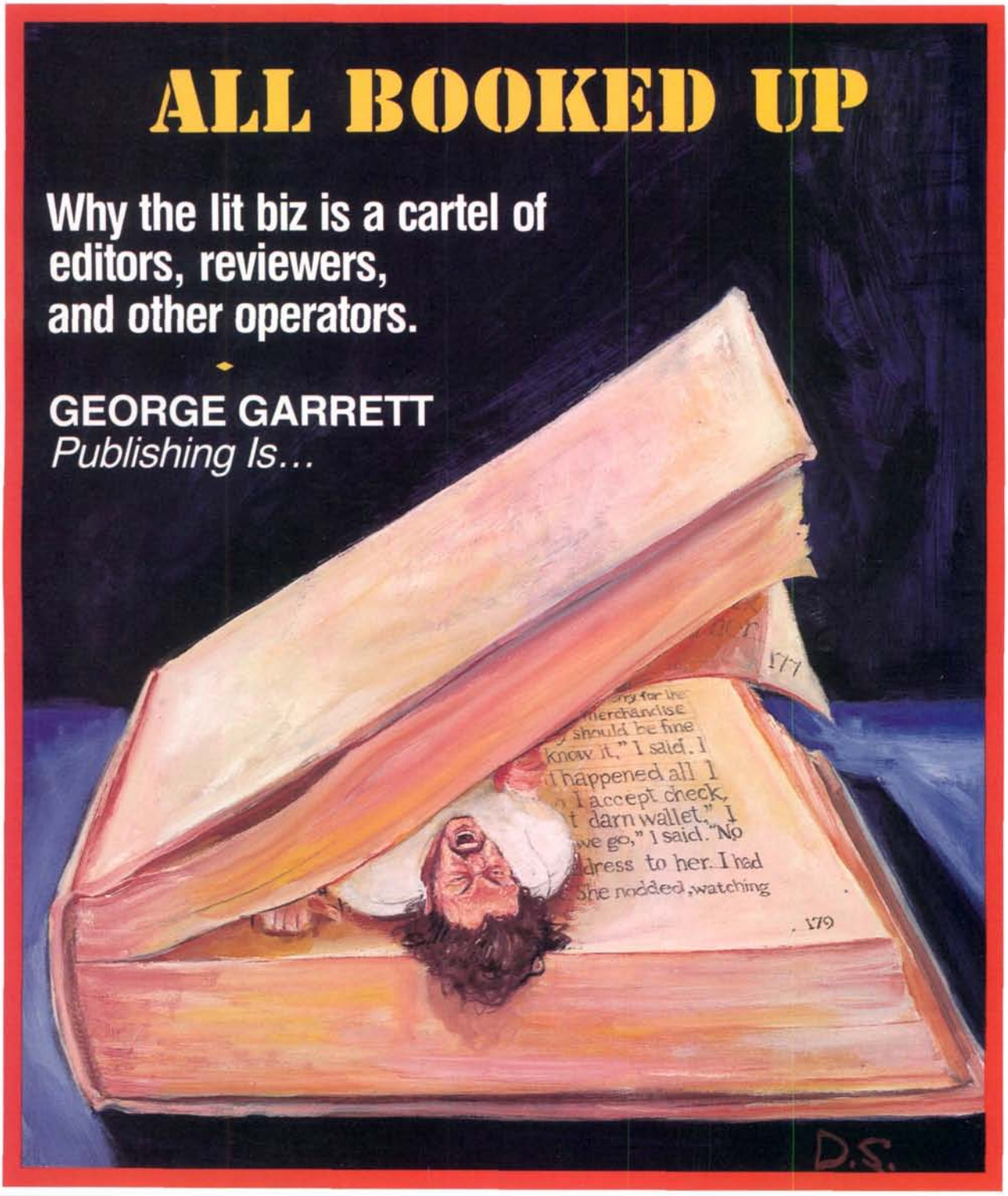

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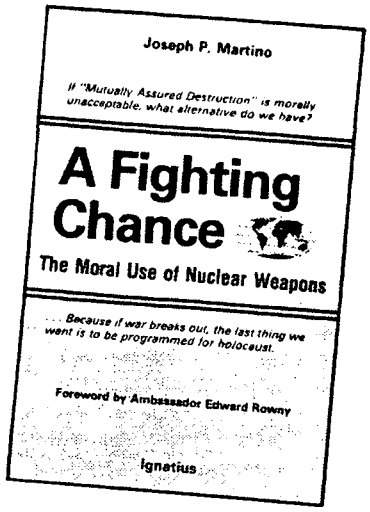
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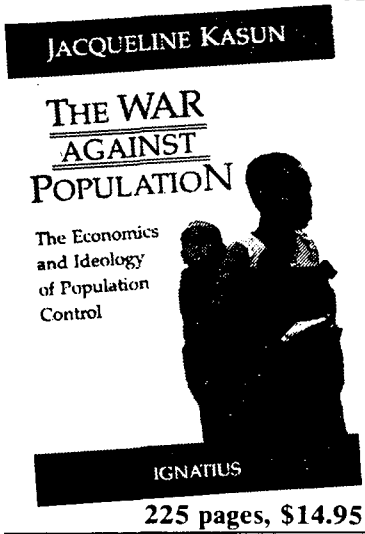

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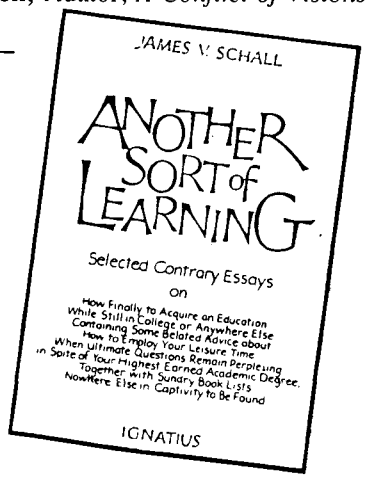
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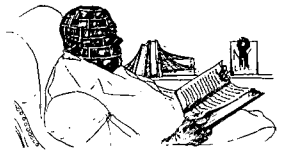

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 13, No. 1 January 1989

On 'Phil Ochs and the Old Prof'

After reading Jane Greer's and R.A. Hill's pieces, (October 1988), I'm reminded vividly of my 1968-70 university years at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Often late in the warm afternoons I'd stroll across campus and meet a throng of mostly college-age activists practicing for their "spontaneous" weekend march. They waved placards, chanted catchy slogans and walked briskly—all in unison and as a show of strength. Quite impressive. Even more so when the media constantly portrayed them as representative of where our society was progressing: antiwar, antiestablishment, and antihypocrisy. The media forgot (and still do) anti- the liberty this country was founded on and fought for that allows us to be anti-whatever.

One Saturday my roommate excitedly prepared for a march along the freeway to the city courthouse. He didn't know what he was protesting (war, or something like that), but he was certain it was some sincere cause. After he returned he said he'd marched for homosexual rights, and the grand moment had been when some guys had urinated on the bottom courthouse step. Later he took me aside and asked what it was homosexuals grooved on.

In the spring of 1968 I eagerly waited in the UW fieldhouse for the appearance of Robert Kennedy, our savior. Never had I seen a presidential candidate show unadulterated compassion like him. His rhetoric seemed timely and heartfelt; surely he was The One our country had been anticipating. I stood within an arm's length of RFK's entrance. He looked unheroically tired, was more gray-haired than I'd hoped, and shorter than I'd imagined. When he spoke, his ideas seemed to pour forth vigorously, but then somehow disunite before they reached my itching ears. Yes, I raised my hand and mouthed platitudes at the appropriate pauses, but something was missing. My political bent was still in disarray when RFK was assassinated in June. After that I set politics out to pasture.

Many demonstrators, even supposedly socially and politically enlightened collegians, were and are as naive and self-serving as the authorities and public they criticize. They don't know or want to know that their peace parades have already been proven historically to encourage and aid the real enemy. They march for a cause not so much because they believe in that cause, but because they believe in nothing but need something to bring purpose to their existence. Love of God, country and family is now fashionable only for so-called sentimental reprobates—not for our educated, imperviously-intellectual youth, many of whom, statistics indicate, will not be proficient in reading this sentence.

As George Harrison bemoaned near the end of my higher learning debacle, "Isn't it a pity? Isn't it a shame?"

—*Gary Severson*
Everson, WA

After reading R.A. Hill's piece, I found myself rereading the magazine's masthead. For a moment I thought I had read a transcript for the Oprah Winfrey Show, so overwhelming was the desire to say, "Thank you for sharing that with me."

That the number of such "stories" is perhaps incalculable doesn't mean that any of them, Hill's among others, should see the light of the printed page. Most anyone who was a part of the so-called Pepsi generation has a tale of

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how "I was like that then, and now I'm in real estate," or "now I'm a Reagan Republican," or even "I'm a Dukakis Democrat." It's a matter of political maturation, of realizing that the source of one's political urgency isn't contained behind one's trouser zipper or in that quagmire of adolescent hormones. (Phil Ochs died in 1976, not "the early 70's," as so reported; a minor point, but if one is recalling factual evidence, then it should be reported accurately — a basic rule of history. And is the reader to be drawn to the erroneous conclusion that alcoholism leads to suicide? And, aside from his being a convenient caricature, what about Hill's Uncle Don?) I have my own recollections of the 60's, as do friends and acquaintances. But to trot them out in autobiography for the printed page with such a lack of perspective is much like an argument with the *thirty-something* crowd that holds the music of the 60's in an elevated place short of the Eucharist itself; it's both self-promotion and social fraud.

Which brings me back to my first sentence. I've come to view *Chronicles* as a vehicle for intellectual observation and analysis, itself based upon the strength of a moral core, a thing, unfortunately, in short supply. It is the rare article that fails to fulfill that expectation. And it makes me hope for the strong arm of the editor the next time some "recollection" like that of R.A. Hill's should come over the transom.

—Dennis T. Jovenetti
Prescott, AZ

On 'Yankee Slavers'

Clyde Wilson's review (October 1988) provoked some meditation on my part. I can understand the charge that proslavery thinking marked the clergy of the North. What intrigues me is to know how it all started. I would like to see an article relating biblical theology to the social life of America beginning with the Pilgrims.

There is one statement in Mr. Wilson's review that I can't totally agree with. It is "antislavery is not biblical." I find no biblical sanction for the enslaving of a race, be it black or Indian, such as has been practiced in America. In fact, God repeatedly reminded His people to give equal treatment to the foreigner, stating that they had been slaves in Egypt. The biblical servitude was beneficient and the application of the same to our modern life could improve the quality of life for many individuals.

Earl J. Wilder, Jr.
Bemidji, MN

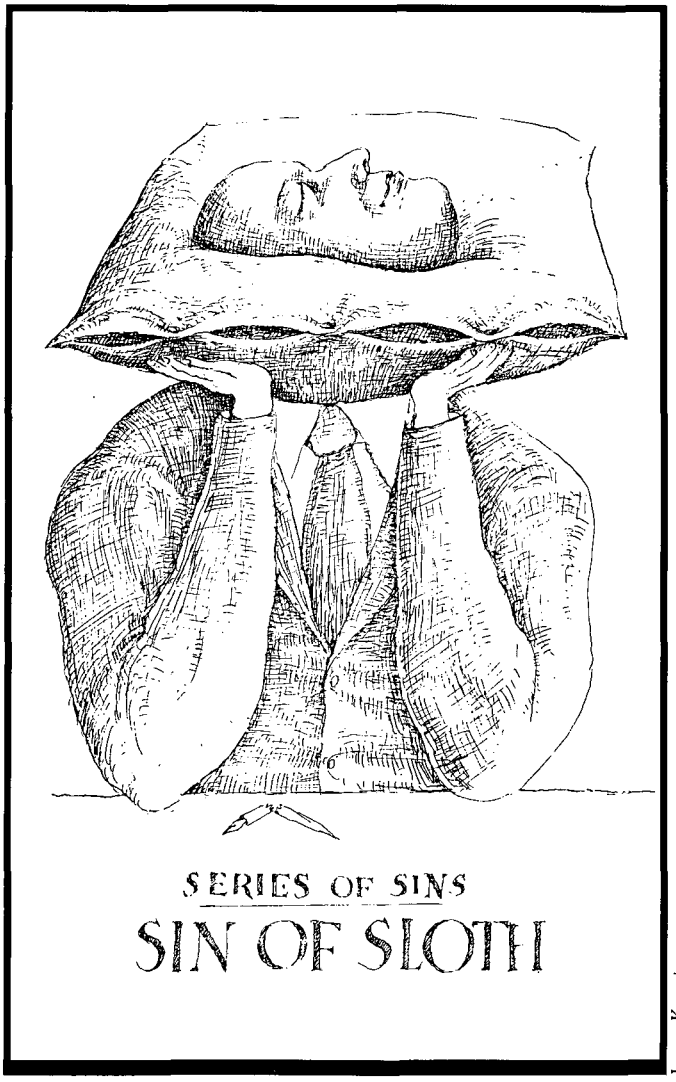
On 'Time'

Jocelyn Tomkin (*Chronicles*, September 1988) refers to the precession of the perihelion of Mercury as evidence for Einstein's theory of general relativity. However, Einstein's theory, with its bizarre distortions of space and time, is not required to explain Mercury's orbit. A formula accurately describing the advance of the perihelion was derived by Paul Gerber in 1898, 17 years before Einstein's formula. Gerber, who was probably a high school teacher in Pomerania, used classical physics and assumed that gravity propagates with velocity *c*.

Mercury's orbit, all other experimentally verified phenomena predicted from special relativity, and two additional observations (the quantization of electron orbits and the Titius series) are also explained by a theory that does not distort space and time, proposed by Petr Beckmann in *Einstein Plus Two* (1987).

I agree with Tomkin that Einstein's theory does not support universal relativism. But Beckmann has also raised the possibility that Einstein might be wrong.

—Jane M. Orient, M.D.
Tucson, AZ



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WHEN WE ARGUE about what should be taught in schools and colleges, at stake is our conception of the world. Our theory of the world tells us what we should teach, and whom we may ignore.

Debates precipitated by Secretary Bennett's important criticism of the Stanford curriculum centered upon the inclusion of formerly-ignored groups. But how to include Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific in such a way as to hold the whole together? Merely political arguments against or for affording a full hearing to the neglected parts of the world are beside the point. If Africa, China, and Latin America are important, they belong within the curriculum, and if not, then mere institutional politics should not make any difference. But what defines importance? The real question is not how to include everyone, but why to include *anyone*, East or West. There has to be a single theory of the whole, of what has made the world we propose to explain to the coming generations and so to hand on to them.

I think we should continue to lay stress on the West and its history and culture, because the West has made the world we know. Anyone who wants to participate in world civilization in the coming century had better know precisely how and why the West has defined, and will continue to define, that civilization. Why do I say so? Because everybody wants what we have.

People aspire to those material advantages that flow, uniquely I think, from the modes of social organization that the West has devised — the West's economics, the West's science and technology, and also, let us say it straight out, the West's politics and philosophy. Since the simple fact of world civilization is that the West has now defined the world's economy, politics, and philosophy, and since all social systems measure themselves by Western civilization in its capacity to afford to large masses of people both material wealth and political power, the West demands close study.

Study India, China, Japan, Latin America? Of course. But what do we want to know? One critical question that demands our study of the rest of the world is simply this: why has the West created what the rest now wants? Why is there no capitalism in India, China, or Judaism? Why no science in Africa? Why so little democracy in Asia? And, conversely, why all of these in the West?

We have so much to learn from other countries, once we establish our common questions and perspectives. But there is no understanding the world without the West. Democracy, capitalism, anticolonialism, science, technology, ever-rising productivity in industry and agriculture — these deeply Western (and, as a matter of fact, quintessentially American) values are now universal. They define what there is to know about everyone, everywhere — beginning, of course, with ourselves.

— *Jacob Neusner*

THE BENNETT interregnum has come to a close at the Department of Education. The former secretary of education had his shortcomings, but the vice with which he was most frequently charged — being "confrontational," failing to "build coalitions with educators" — was actually his greatest virtue. Bennett knew better than to attempt significant reform by backroom dealings and conciliation with professional educators. He frequently bypassed congressional committee meetings in order to work the talk shows. Instead of delivering speeches within the Beltway, he hit the road to Harvard and Stanford and 43 other colleges and universities; and as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* notes, "he rarely abided by the etiquette of not criticizing one's host." By such tactics he heightened public awareness of the dismal state of American education.

By contrast, the new secretary of education, Lauro Cavazos, promises to behave himself. He has gone out of his way to renounce Bennett's positions and called for an expanded Department of Education, more money ("the best funding possible"), and bilingual education. His performance at his confirmation hearings led Senator Kennedy to pronounce himself "very impressed." At this writing, George Bush seems likely to keep Cavazos on, having made much of his delight at having the first Hispanic cabinet officer; and at any rate, Bush aides have made it known that whomever they appoint will be nothing like Bennett. Thus, inevitably, the Department of Education is reverting to the role for which it was designed — the federal government branch of the education establishment. Whether the administration is Republican or Democrat makes little difference.

A sample of what we can expect is the case of Shirley Curry, an Education Department official presently being pilloried in Congress for declining to fund a program called "Facing History and Ourselves." Purportedly a Holocaust education program for high-schoolers, it is reported by scholars who have reviewed it to minimize the role of the Nazi Party, preferring to attribute the genocide to the Pope, the Catholic Church, Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church in Germany, and Christian civilization in general; the program's high-school audience is meant to believe, as the title implies, that the blame attaches to "ourselves." When Dr. Curry first turned down the program two years ago, questions were raised in Congress, but Secretary Bennett stood by her. Scarcely had Bennett departed, however, when her critics returned, accusing Dr. Curry of "anti-Semitism." The message is clear for any other Bennett holdovers in office: stand and deliver. (MK)

ETHNIC DISTURBANCES pose "the most immediate threat to Gorbachev, the one thing that could put him out of power," said the Deputy Director of the CIA, Robert M. Gates. Zbigniew Brzezinski and other US analysts concurred. The recent ethnic strife in Estonia, Latvia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Bulgaria,

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even Yugoslavia is, in the words of *The New York Times*, endangering the "process of gradual change in Eastern Europe."

But are expectations of "gradual change" in the Communist world realistic? In Yugoslavia, for long a showcase of the US State Department ("nudging towards change"), 40 years of *glasnost* and *perestroika* have brought no lessening in Communist Party control over the lives of ordinary Yugoslavs. Between Milan Kucan, the "liberal" Communist leader of the northern Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, and Slobodan Milosevic, the "Stalinist" Serbian strongman, the only differences are in how to make Communism work. In Slovenia's case, the economy has been made to function well (on a Western European level), but Slovenes like Janez Janca, Ivan Borstner, and Franci Zavrl were sentenced to prison for having demanded a democratic Yugoslavia.

Yet Gorbachev seems to be expected, by the CIA no less than by other US policymakers, to miraculously transform the USSR from an international bully into a mercantile partner. Even Slobodan Milosevic is seen, by some Western reporters, as a "Gorbachevian" liberal, because of his announced desire to make the Yugoslav economy more free.

One Yugoslav dissident, however, puts these maneuvers in perspective: "They [the Communists] want to make Yugoslavia something like South Korea—a dictatorship with a powerhouse economy." Unfortunately, Gorbachev (who spent his March 1988 visit to Yugoslavia mostly in Slovenia) seems merely to want the USSR to be able to deliver microchips and butter, *as well as* AK-47's and ICBM's.

But are the 70 years of Soviet imperial aggression an outcome of the lack of oranges in Moscow, or does the problem lie deeper? Are Armenians, Poles, Letts, or Serbs to be sacrificed forever to the fleeting goodwill of a world power that has "restructured" itself from a tsarist hegemony into a socialist one? Helping democracy in the USSR —which involves not hindering its movements for ethnic self-determination—may not look entirely "safe," but it is, in the long run, much safer than facing a transmogrified, expansionist empire, often less than willing to hide its true designs. (MS)

VIKTOR TROSTNIKOV, a scientist and philosopher from Moscow, recently paid a visit to Washington, DC. A decade ago he was fired from his job as professor of higher mathematics at the Moscow Institute of Railway Engineering, for participation in the almanac *Metropol*, and he currently earns a living as a mason. He is the author of *Thoughts Before Dawn* (Paris, 1980), an extremely interesting critique of some of the fundamental tenets of positivism and Marxism in light of the latest discoveries in quantum physics. Thanks to the spirit of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Trostnikov was allowed to come to the US for a few days to take part in the celebration of the millennium of Russian Christianity. Here is his assessment of what constitutes the totalitarian disease of Soviet society.

"The patient must be treated for his ailment, not for its symptoms. And since we fell ill at the spiritual level, the treatment should be administered at that same level. If the authorities are really eager to save the nation, they must above all recognize the divine origins of man. Until they do, whatever they undertake is doomed to be an exercise in futility . . . Today, our most pressing need is neither free enterprise, nor the broadening of *glasnost*, nor even human rights, but an official admission that Marxism was a pack of lies and Stalinism a cruel hoax . . . The rest will follow automatically . . . Today, we must not concentrate on derivative things, but on the fundamentals from which they spring forth."

—*Mihajlo Mihajlov*

I RECENTLY RETURNED from a visit to Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, and there is no question about there being more freedom to express ideas. But reports of change are exaggerated. There are still no nongovernmental publishing houses. Two of the more popular journals, *Ogonyok* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, are sold out quickly and there is a waiting list for subscribers. More are not printed because of a supposed "paper shortage," though every kiosk in Moscow is well-supplied with Lenin's works. And no publication, no matter now adventuresome, attacks Gorbachev.

I could purchase Russian language editions of dead literary greats like Akhmatova, Tsvetayeva, or Bulgakov in the state-run shops open only for foreigners with foreign currency. These same books were unavailable to the Soviets at their own bookstores. All of these books would sell on the street for at least ten times their shop price. Bibles on the street would sell for about one-fifth of an average monthly salary. I stayed at major Intourist hotels, but none of them had European editions of American or even European papers. I could not find them at airports, train stations, or major newsstands.

When I returned home I read an AP story of a visiting Soviet official who said his country is "as open as the Wild West once was" and how the "USSR now has limitless opportunities." That's ridiculous. Soviet consumers still stand in long lines. I went to an expensive private cooperative restaurant in Leningrad where, though the food was good, the waiter apologized profusely because they were not allowed to sell any alcoholic beverages. This was not the case at the state-run hard currency Intourist restaurants.

Clothes are shoddy and expensive. I saw a suit at GUM ("the world's largest department store") that cost 200 rubles ($350 at the official exchange rate) that might sell for $125 in America. Their cheapest car, the Lada, sells for 10,000 rubles ($16,500 at the official rate), while the average worker makes 2,700 rubles a year. In the larger cities there are state shops that sell better-quality goods at cheaper prices, but only for foreign currency. In effect, the Soviets run their own black market, though people on the street continually offer to snap up foreign currency at two or three times the official rates. (If the Soviets allowed the ruble to be bought and sold internationally, the exchange rate in relation to the dollar might increase from $1.65 to the ruble to at least 3 to 4 rubles per dollar.)

The Soviet Union is not the Wild West, or the Wild East, and there are no indicators it will become so.

—*Michael Warder*

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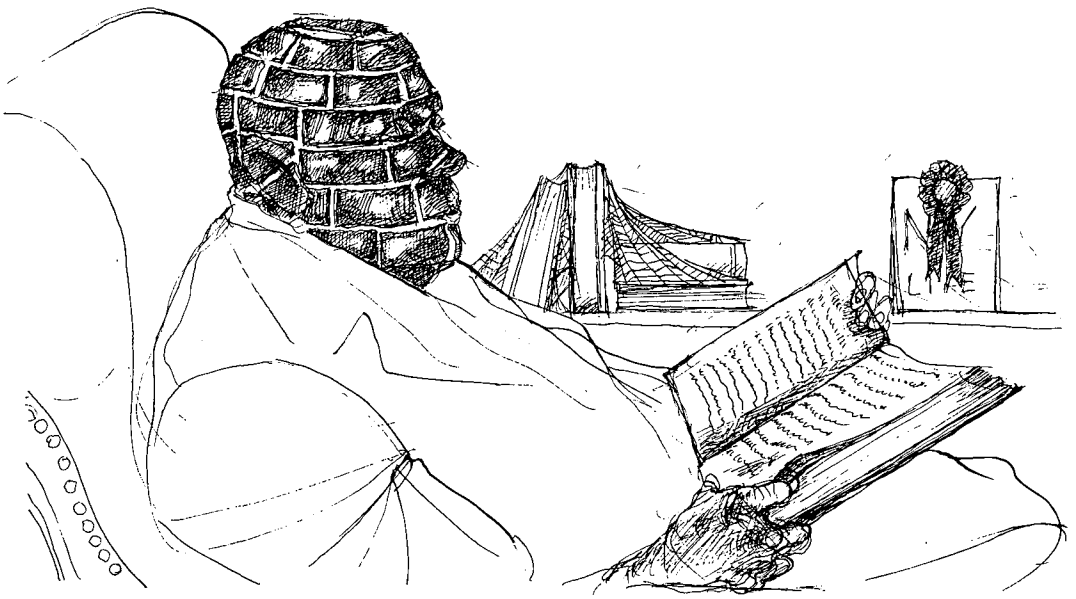

Kazin and Caligula?

by Thomas Fleming

"Our literature is infested with a swarm of just such little people as this—creatures who succeed in creating for themselves an absolutely positive reputation, by mere dint of the continuity and perpetuality of their appeals to the public."

—E.A. Poe

In our age the business of literature has become as stale and well-organized as the reports, memoranda, and self-help books that comprise the literature of business. The days have long since past, when book-reading publishers hired learned editors to put out magazines like *The Nation* and *The Atlantic* or solicit original books for Scribner's or Little, Brown. In our time vast conglomerates hire division managers to supervise publishing operations and promote the latest efforts of the Collins sisters. If they are looking for "quality," they end up hiring a menagerie of schemers and poetasters who combine the literary taste of Alfred Kazin with the integrity of Gordon Lish.

Writers who make a living by running down the age they happen to live in—"the idiot who praises in enthusiastic tones every century but this and every country but his own"—have offered a variety of reasons for the decadence of our national literature. The usual suspects include the democratization of taste, the tendency of the marketplace to vulgarize everything it touches, the international Communist/Trilateralist conspiracy, and the centralization of power in New York in the hands of what Richard Kostelanetz (in *The Decline of Intelligent Writing*) calls "the mob." There is something to be said for each of these fantasies, but like all conspiracy theories they suffer from one critical defect: they do not explain how an otherwise healthy organism got taken over by parasites and traitors.

It is a fine rabbinical technique to answer one question by asking another: *cui bono*? who benefits from the corruption? In answering that one, we are led to consider the fundamental questions of who gets what and how and why in the literature business—in other words, who's in control. Being in control of anything means, essentially, the ability to reward your friends and punish your enemies. In literary terms, it is the power to patronize and its reflex, the power to censor.

Any simple-minded economist could explain the relationship between censorship and patronage. Imagine a society that has, say, only a billion dollars to spend on the written word. If the powers that be decide that $950 million will be spent on Barbara Cartland novels and copies of *The New Republic*, the chances of success for a serious novel or an open-minded magazine are somewhat reduced. Of course in a free market economy such a scenario would be

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ridiculous, but we do not live in a free market economy. Literature is controlled by monopolies and cartels that are about as open to competition as the postal system: Northeastern publishers, book agents, reviewers, foundations, government agencies, and the vast network of libraries and universities, private as well as public.

The vastness and diversity of these enterprises rule out anything so harmless as a conspiracy. Indeed, the authors of a major sociological study of the book trade (*Books: The Culture & Commerce of Publishing*) argue that the diversity of the various intellectual circles and the lack of connections within the actual trade have reduced the significance of "networking" in recent years (although they make an exception in the case of academic publishing). This objection to conspiracy theories is less cogent than it might be. In the first place, the fact that there are a number of different circles does not necessarily make the publishing business more open to outsiders: among academics, for example, the circle of Yale liberal philosophers does not overlap with Yale literary theorists; however, both circles have privileged access to certain elite presses, and neither group is particularly open to alternative points of view.

In the second place, it is probably misleading to speak of the publishing business in broad terms. What connection could we expect between, say, Alex Haley and Thomas Sowell? If we are interested in the control of ideas, then the arrangements made for publishing pulp fiction and diet books are irrelevant. What is important is control over the first several tiers of influence upon opinion-makers, and in this environment the publishing industry is a set of closed shops. Richard Kostelanetz, by the way, includes Lewis Coser, the senior author of that major study, as an important member of the establishment. It is important to bear in mind that we are not dealing with an infinite set of personalities: the same people move easily from chairs at major universities to seats on the National Arts and Humanities Councils to editorships at publishing houses to positions as referees and directors of every conceivable granting agency; of course, they are also among the most frequent recipients of grants from not only such government agencies as NEH, NSF, and NEA, but also from the MacArthur, Ford, Guggenheim, and Rockefeller foundations.

Consider a few of the most obvious examples. Some time ago we pointed out the astonishing career of Gordon Lish, would-be novelist, editor at *Esquire* and Alfred Knopf, Yale professor, and recipient of awards from the Columbia School of Journalism and the American Society of Magazine Editors. Even more instructive is the *cursus honorum* of Alfred Kazin, who has worked for *The New Republic* and *Fortune*, taught at Smith, NYU, Amherst, Berkeley, Hunter, and Stonybrook, and received money from Guggenheim, Rockefeller, NEH, and the American Academy in Rome. Kazin's entertaining memoir, *New York Jew*, is an impressive roster of the operatives who have kept the culture machine oiled since the 1930's: Lionel Trilling, Richard Hofstadter, Edmund Wilson, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Sylvia Plath, Paul Goodman, and Robert Lowell among many others. Some are bright, some talented, some—like Kazin himself—merely ambitious, all hustlers.

Somewhere in Kazin's circle of friends is Jason Epstein, former editor at Doubleday, editorial director of Random House, a director and founder (along with his wife, Robert Lowell and his wife Elizabeth Hardwick, poet James Merrill, A. Whitney Ellsworth—also associated with *The Atlantic* and Harvard—and Robert Silvers) of *The New York Review of Books*. Silvers, a member of the editorial board of the *Paris Review* and former associate editor of *Harper's*, became co-editor of the NYRB. Those who have done the tedious work of reading back issues have noticed the strange coincidence: publishing firms with strong ties to the founders just happen to get their books regularly featured in the NYRB.

None of this networking and logrolling is exactly new. As long ago as 1849, Edgar Allan Poe made the same complaint against "the manner in which the cabal of *The North American Review* first write all our books and then review them." Today, however, the same people not only write and review the books, they also arrange the money and the prizes.

It is not that all of these people are without talent or do not deserve the summer homes of which they are, as Kazin complains, so proud. Lowell was far from being the worst poet of his time, and for all his weaknesses Edmund Wilson was among the best of a bad lot of American culturecritics. Even Kazin is capable of an occasional insight, but does anyone really think that the richness and diversity of American life is fairly represented by Kazin, Epstein, Lish, and Silvers? Was their friend Delmore Schwartz, whose dismal life has been immortalized in countless novels, memoirs, and biographies, even a passable poet? Is there anyone who better sums up the rotten state of American verse—its dullness, incompetence and careerism—than James Merrill? It does not require the imaginative paranoia of Richard Kostelanetz to find something awry, when the literary life of a nation of almost 250 million people is under the control of a few dozen New Yorkers who, by the way, have no qualms about boasting of their success.

In figuring out the situation, some form of Public Choice theory might be invoked. In his interview with Madison Bell (*Chronicles*, June 1988), George Garrett pointed out that the market for contemporary poetry is not readers and book buyers, but the people who decide on grants and tenure. To a lesser—but very real—extent, the same holds true of most serious writing: novelists above the level of E.L. Doctorow and Jay McInerney, more competent historians than Barbara Tuchman, sounder scholars than Michael Grant or Allan Bloom—all of them have to write with at least one eye on the professional colleagues who have the power of life and death over their careers. Under these circumstances the life of the mind is reduced to a labyrinthine web controlled by a number of powerful spiders sensitive to every move within the network. An original writer who enters the web hasn't the fly's chance of making his escape.

This has little to do with "capitalism"—although the concentration of power makes it easier to make money off publishing—and only a little more to do with the regional arrogance of the Northeastern literati—although it is they who have controlled nearly every aspect of our impoverished intellectual life since even before Poe's time. (The rise of the

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Southern writers in the 30's was only a temporary interruption in the smooth running of the New York-Boston hegemony. Hilariously, Kostelanetz thinks there was a Southern mafia dominated by Allen Tate and William Faulkner, who more or less couldn't stand each other.) Conspiracies aside, our literature exhibits all the ugliest features of monopoly: our writers are smug, uncompetitive, and incompetent; they are so obviously satisfied with their own performance, they cannot understand why no one in his right mind (i.e., people who are not in the business) ever reads their stuff. The most conspicuous exceptions prove the rule: interesting articles still appear in the *Hollins Critic* and the *Sewanee Review*, or in *The American Scholar*, which is edited in Chicago by a Chicagoan (Joseph Epstein).

In this context, the great debate over censorship in America is nothing more than a distraction from the main point. It is hard to believe that the defenders of intellectual freedom really want us to take them seriously. University of Minnesota librarian David Berninghausen, in a tract published by the American Library Association (*The Flight From Reason*), continues to fear a rightist conspiracy against the First Amendment. From it you can see how the fanaticism of the New Left in the 60's and 70's has really resulted in an upsurge of McCarthyism. That Berninghausen, who has also held positions in the ACLU and the AAUP, does not see himself and his organizations as part of the reigning establishment, can only be due to the blinders of regionalism. If he lived in New York, he would be either more perceptive or more candid.

What does the ALA's Library Bill of Rights mean, for an industry that is, for the most part, so tightly controlled? All the news that's fit to print, of course. If ideas and writers too exotic or too conservative for *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, and the various buying services do make it into print, they usually will not have to face actual censorship: they simply won't be reviewed, distributed, or purchased. If a comparatively small number of publishers, editors, and critics don't happen to like you or if, like George Gilder and Kingsley Amis, you step on the toes of feminists or homosexuals, even the prospects of a healthy sale will not tempt most publishers. If we accept the old definition of censorship as prior restraint on publishing, then the only real censors in the US are Alfred Kazin and the Our Gang members who have spent their lives patting each other on the back, and funding and honoring each other's books. Writers and editors who had the courage to "break ranks," in Mr. Podhoretz's phrase, are insulted in the vilest terms. For this reason, the so-called neoconservatives probably can never go back to the old alliance. In comparison with the heavy-handed power of the Northeastern left, a few scattered cases of book-burning in middle America are hardly worth the attention they have received in the press.

Consider a few fairly recent censorship cases that are supposed to boil the blood of every right-thinking civil libertarian:

—The case of *Hazelwood School District* v. *Kuhlmeider* in which a superior court declared that a high-school principal could in fact censor the school newspaper.

—The Reagan administration's decision to close down the PLO information office in September 1987.

—The district court ruling against the Librarian of Congress who dropped *Playboy* from the Library's braille publication series; the judge declared the action to be "a type of censorship."

—Complaints against the National Endowment for the Arts for funding allegedly pornographic poets; the NEA's predictable answer was the cry of "censorship."

—The several cases in Canada, West Germany, and elsewhere, in which teachers and writers have been prosecuted for challenging the standard view of the Holocaust.

—Finally: Tipper Gore and rock music, textbook cases in Alabama and Tennessee, attacks on *Huckleberry Finn* and other literary works for racist and sexist stereotypes, new feminist pornography laws in Indianapolis and Minneapolis, threats of violence against performances of Vanessa Redgrave, who supports the PLO, and the PTA's national call for rating rock music.

The most striking of these cases are little more than minor league conflicts between ethnic, political, and religious factions: feminists against liberals, fundamentalists against atheists, Jews against Arabs, blacks against whites. Meanwhile our intellectual life is dominated by the same people who have been running things since the 30's; which brings us back to the question of how it happened.

I don't have a complete answer, but I can guess at part of it. Once upon a time there were rivals to the literary monolith of the Northeast; once upon a time New York was independent of New England, although even James Fenimore Cooper saw the change coming. Even after the New York-Boston axis took over American letters, regional centers like Charleston, Richmond, and Baltimore were able to support the careers of Poe, Gilmore Simms, and Lanier.

However, regional and local diversity were only possible under a political and economic system that guaranteed the rights of states and local communities. In the past two generations, Congress, the federal courts, and countless regulatory agencies have done their best to destroy the federal structure of our government. All our businesses, including publishing, are now dominated by national and multinational corporations regulated by national (and even international) agencies. The various trade groups and interest groups representing writers, editors, and publishers are national (or, in the case of PEN, international) in scope. Although some small measure of local autonomy is permitted, censorship per se is more and more a matter for federal courts to decide.

One speculative conclusion emerges from all of this, that in any enterprise there is a rough correspondence between the locus of control and organization and the locus of regulation: if a business is locally regulated, there is a greater likelihood that it will be locally owned and operated. When federal courts, the FCC, the FTC, and the ICC regulate things, there are obvious advantages that accrue to national organizations, whether the business is hardware or literature. The Emperor Caligula, who apparently understood the value of centralization, is said to have wished that all of Rome had but one neck. For some time now, our national literature has had something like one neck. Small wonder it has proved so easy to lop off our collective head.

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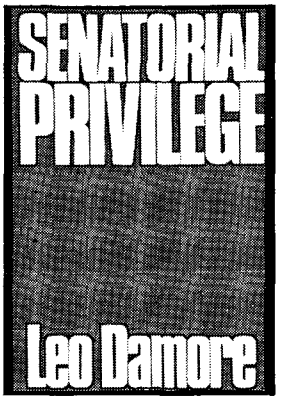

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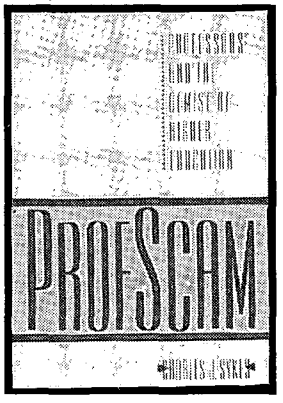

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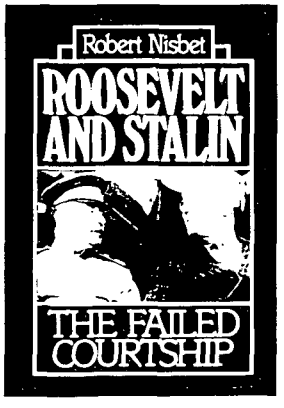

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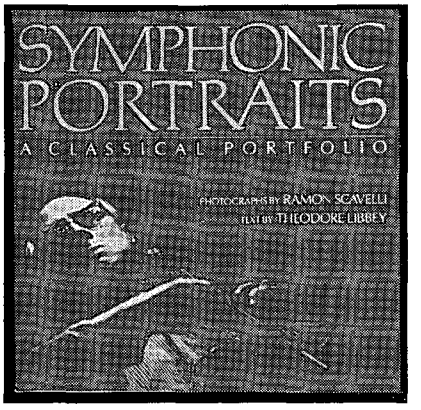

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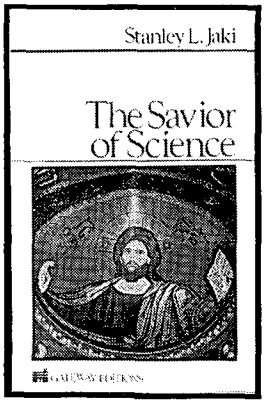

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Publishing Is . . .

by George Garrett

"Publishing is something I sort of drifted into."
—Gary Fisketjon

In a world, ours, in which large and small atrocities are our daily fare and to which atrocities we often seem to have become so ruthlessly accustomed as to have surrendered our ability to raise our eyebrows or to perform any moral gesture whatsoever above and beyond the habitual shrug (grinning or weeping, no matter) of late 20th-century mankind, it may seem mostly unimportant, if not wholly irrelevant, to waste time and space and energy on the subject of (yet again) the faulty ways and means of American publishing. After all, at its best and finest, publishing is only a marginally profitable enterprise; as a business it cannot be taken very seriously. And at its worst, it is a home not (anymore) for colorful pirates or dangerous villains, but, alas, for all-too-common and familiar knaves and fools of the kind who can be found everywhere in abundance in every sort of vocation as this bloody, weary century dances in spastic jerks towards its sure and certain demise.

Yet we believe, as we have to, that books are important. All the more so in a nation that professes to be free and hopes to remain so, all of our leaders and institutions being united in consensual approbation of the free and easy flow of and access to ideas, and images as well; professing a consensual belief in this ideal in spite of, indeed in the face of actions of all kinds from all sides to prevent all but the simplest or most frivolous of ideas (all but the most stereotypical of images) from being tested in the fire of serious, sustained debate and discussion. With some notable exceptions (the pure documentary films of Frederick Wiseman, for a rare example), television has turned into not a wasteland so much as a theme park devoted to simple problems and simplistic solutions, with an attendant graveyard for any unfamiliar or unpopular notion that might require more than a minute for elucidation. Can't we (finally!) agree on that much and be done with the subject? Television offers a certain amount of crude entertainment, mind-cleansing if seldom mind-blowing, but is, by definition and design, unable to deal with even the rudiments of thought, let alone the dance of ideas. In the world of television Bill Moyers is a sage. Enough said. Except that this central and incurable vacuity, one that automatically includes illiteracy in a rich variety of forms, has made our books, such as they are, and, of course, the people who make and publish these books, more important than anyone could have earlier imagined. Maybe too important. People, including judges, legislators, and senior executives, *act* on the basis of things they have read. In spite of the clamor and consequent laughter and forgetting, some may still remember that in the "debate" between Quayle and Bentsen both candidates were asked by reporters, and asked as if it were a

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smirky trick question, to name a couple of books they had read in times within recent memory. It was an oddly tense moment or two for partisans of both sides; for nobody could be sure that either of these two office-seekers had indeed read anything or, anyway, could remember the experience of reading anything and summon up titles and maybe authors to go with the experience. Surprisingly, both recalled reading some fairly recent books, works of uneven value to be sure; but the question and answers interested nobody.

We may be approaching that level of illiteracy in which the book, itself, becomes a thing of magic, and those who write, publish, and actually read books can be identified as magicians.

So many of the basic, simple things about American book publishing have been said and said again (shelves of books on the general topic, stacks of magazines begging to be sent to the nearest incinerator or, if you insist, to the nearest recycling center), that one is forced to assume the expression and stance of the prophet in the Richard Wilbur poem, appearing "mad-eyed from stating the obvious." And yet there are some things that bear repeating. One of these is most obvious, and therefore least often said: that American publishing is, bag and baggage, heart and soul, an entity more involved than disengaged from the fabric of American society and the world of American business. It is true that most publishers, like professors of the humanities, like to pretend, as much to themselves as to anyone else, that they are somehow separate from and superior to the mainstream of American society and culture. Because publishing is not a very good nor a very efficient business and because publishers do not make as much profit as the purveyors of other, often humbler products, they like to imagine themselves as dedicated individuals who have somehow or other transcended all crude self-interest and are now performing a kind of sacrificial public service, one without which the intellectual vital signs of the whole culture would wither, shrivel, and disappear. They tend to be inordinately proud of their amateur status. It is only when facing each other, in concentric rings like the gravestones of the celebrated Sedgwick family surrounding the imposing tomb of their founding father, in this case the tomb of somebody like, say, the late Alfred Knopf, that they will show the bright grin the shark reserves for greeting its prey. They are not really a lovable bunch, except to themselves; and you come away from examining all the books about them, their lives and their works and days, with the very strong suspicion that even the best and brightest among them are sincerely second-rate. Without being cynical or sour it is quite easy to arrive at the proposition that if the best you can come up with as exemplary figures are the likes of Cerf or Knopf or Horace Liveright, if these are the giants of the industry, then the industry must be and have always been a kind of reservation for pygmies.

Consider the editors, then, you will argue. Ironically, I answer, the finest times (such as they were) for editors of excellence, for the likes of Maxwell Perkins and Saxe Commins and Albert Erskine and Hiram Hayden, were precisely the same times when editors had least to do with the business and commerce of publishing. They acquired and edited books. Most of today's successful editors make deals; they make book, not books. One of the most widely publicized of the new breed, Gary Fisketjon, now editorial director of the Atlantic Monthly Press, is quoted in a brand new book (*Reasons to Believe: New Voices in American Fiction*) as having this to say about the ways of his predecessors: "I find this whole Maxwell Perkins line of thinking sophomoric." Several other editors are singled out for special praise in *Reasons to Believe*—Seymour Lawrence, Gordon Lish ("In the world of contemporary fiction, Gordon Lish is a true Renaissance man"), and Tom Jenks. Oddly missing is the equally public and perhaps more influential Ted Solotaroff, whose highly personal *A Few Good Voices in My Head* (1987) has much to tell, and more to demonstrate, about the ways American publishing has developed and changed. It should be briefly noted that three of these—Jenks, Lish, and Solotaroff—consider themselves to be fiction writers as well. In any case, however, you wouldn't yet put any of these names in a list that included the honored and honorable editors of the past, would you? Seriously?

What I am saying here is, yes, that as a business American publishing doesn't amount to much and that therefore the people who make up American publishing don't amount to a whole lot, either, and probably never did, even though the previous generation is beginning to look better every day. With the exception of some rich kids who couldn't think of anything better or easier to do with themselves, most people in American publishing are eagerly upwardly-mobile types, clawing for whatever honor and status they can claim and get. This, of course, makes them at once predictable and unreliable. Predictably unreliable, then. Ideally suited to be middlemen in an enterprise that lives more and more on the fumes of borrowed money that it shares in moderation with its writers in the form of advances against future royalties, if any.

The most intelligent and thorough general accounting of recent directions in American publishing is the final chapter, "What Has Happened to Publishing," in the Solotaroff book. His enemy in that piece is the "corporate mentality," more and more felt in editorial offices as publishing houses are acquired in mergers by larger corporations, an increasingly multinational phenomenon. This can make it tough on editors who have to live and act, Solotaroff indicates, by the vaguest of guidelines: "Because each book is different, or at least used to be, publishing is full of contingencies and guesswork; hence, in uncertain circumstances it pays to know who you are and what you do well." (Try *that* on for size in the corporate accounting office.) What Solotaroff describes as the main lines of development in publishing during his career is, in addition to the corporate concentration, an increasing centralization of publishing in New York City and a gradual change in the social class and ethnic background of publishers and editors. Just as the academic world became less and less dominated by downwardly-mobile, genteel WASP professors, so publishing witnessed more and more "examples of Jewish newcomers using family money to establish houses that conformed to their desire and drive to play an important cultural role in New York, much as their counterparts were

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doing in Vienna, Berlin, and London" (as Solotaroff writes). The elements of that "desire and drive," like so many in publishing, are essentially paradoxical.

On the one hand there is a need to shrink the American experience and audience to the most manageable, local limits—"an important cultural role in New York." On the other, there is a sense of internationalism, of a very much larger world, linked by some common interests and the power of great cities, more or less without regard to the countryside (nations) surrounding and supporting them. Needless to say, the predominant point of view presented by American publishing houses is moderately, safely leftist, aggressively urban, and largely indifferent to most of the mainstream political, social, religious, and regional concerns of the country. Thus the relation of publisher to national audience becomes a model of old-fashioned colonialism, of Ancient empire. Those at the imperial center of things need not concern themselves deeply with the wishes and hopes of their audience, the far-flung others, that wider world from Disney World to Disneyland, unless and until there were to be some sort of significant revolt against the cultural imperialism of New York, a revolt, alas, seemingly unlikely because it is one of the sad goals of this particular audience, the audience for American "high" art and culture, to be thought to be deftly in touch with the latest trends and movements coming from the Big City. Thus, for instance, American regional theater, despite the talent of its artists and the support of its audiences, remains doggedly bush league, depending almost completely on New York for identity and certification.

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We may be approaching that level of illiteracy in which the book, itself, becomes a thing of magic.

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Much the same attitude applies to the more complex world of books. Since almost all the topics of nonfiction books are in fact invented in New York publishing offices, it follows that most of the nonfiction we finally get in the provinces is less exemplary of what we might want or need than it is what they think we should receive and read. In nonfiction, then, our choices are somewhat limited, more apt to be more purely *regional*, that region being New York City, in political, social, cultural assumptions, than to reflect the wider and deeper national concerns. Vietnam is a case in point. Will we ever be permitted to read a reasonably "objective" account of that war, those times? Not likely. So much for the free-flowing currency of ideas.

With "images," the presented worlds of fiction and poetry, the situation is somewhat different. With the exceptions of certain best-sellers, none of these things are especially profitable to anybody. Nobody really tries to *lose* money on these ventures in literature (except, occasionally, for tax scams); but their expectations are exceedingly modest. What follows is that, in terms of literary fiction and poetry, the forces of the marketplace (thus ultimately of the hopes and wishes of readers) are not especially influential. Publishers are more like high-placed, old-fashioned patrons (albeit with somebody else's money) than midwives to these arts. It becomes more and more a matter of *personal* selection of materials and support on the part of editors who exercise their power (which is real, since it has so few limits) more out of strictly subjective criteria and self-interest than out of any serious standards of value or even of good taste. As Seymour Lawrence says (in *Reasons to Believe*): "People often ask me how I choose the authors, and I'll say that it's very hard to explain. Often I don't explain it. I'll say that it's an intuitive thing." Not exactly the words of a born salesman. Somewhat more combative is the position of Gordon Lish, as described in *Reasons to Believe*—"Lish couldn't care less whether he is loved or hated, as long as he can act as a catalyst in the development of important artists." For those who might be mildly skeptical, there is the demonstrably judicious integrity of Tom Jenks. "I can't imagine that there is any neglected contemporary fiction at this point," he writes. "I don't think there's a lot that slips through the cracks." The claim is, then, that (boy scout's honor) our publishers are giving us the best and most representative material that comes in to them. Whether you choose to believe that or not will depend on the extent of your experience of placing your trust and faith in the hands of others. To at least some among us, it seems that many of the new generation of editors are asking for the kind of respect usually afforded only to physicians, and specialists at that. The significance of the predominantly *personal* approach to the publication of fiction and poetry is that these editors, first of all, are concerned with shaping the careers of writers they like socially as well as professionally. Networking (as they say) is inevitable. Also inevitable, in a business based on personal commitments, is the doubly emphatic need *to maintain the status quo* they have established. Thus what should be an age of discovery becomes, in fact, a time of stasis, of the wagon train tightly circled against the yowling of nameless savages on the outside.

But there are some forces working against the firm trends of contemporary American publishing. Some are internal. The very size of the big New York publishers makes them wildly unwieldy and inefficient, and burdens them, and their books, with an implausible weight of exorbitant overhead. At their size it is harder and harder to turn a profit with anything even slightly more demanding than the works of Bill Cosby or the meditations of Michael Jackson. Smaller publishers can afford to take more chances and to locate themselves anywhere in America. Thanks to all that and, as well, to the latest technology, we seem to be poised at the edge of a return to regional publishing in America for the first time since the Civil War. Whatever else, regional publishers will be closer to their actual market and thus to the free flow of ideas and images. For the two are intimately related. Meantime university presses, and small presses generally, are coming forward with some of the most interesting and valuable books being published today in America. Some measure of their success (and threat to the present literary establishment) is to be found in the fact that the highly politicized National Endowment for the Arts has cut its modest support of many of these presses in order to consolidate the bulk of its money behind a few strictly

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minority, ethnic, and special-interest presses, ones that otherwise, lacking any solid base of marketplace support, might not survive. Nothing new in this kind of social engineering and fine-tuning. But the real problem of government support and nonsupport of the arts is more knotty and gnarled. Perhaps fortunately, it as yet remains beyond the power of government to do much more than to meddle with the arts. It seems to be, as yet, impossible for government to work much aesthetic harm or good.

In a smaller sense there are always good reasons to consider American publishing, to expose its assumptions and to challenge its assertions and conclusions. In the small and beleaguered world of the study of literature, it is impossible to begin to understand the arts of any age, including our own shabby one, without understanding also, at least in general terms, the means of production and, as well, the motives of the producers, the sharecropper writers as well as the shell-game publishers. For many reasons the successful literary scholars of our age have spent next to no time examining the publishing business and how and to what extent it has shaped the literature of the age. Publishers have been more or less immune to the kind of scrutiny habitually faced by producers and distributors of other products. Like the Press, with which they have a certain kinship, publishers have been spared much for the sake of the free flow of information and ideas. That this desired goal has not been achieved (yet) goes without saying. That the toxic waste of outworn ideas and limited intellectual systems (Marxism, for a blatant example) is relentlessly preserved by the habits and assumptions of American publishers, who wish to educate if not convert us even as we pay our money and take such choices they allow us, ought to give us pause, even as we must turn away towards more pressing and urgent problems. ◈

LIBERAL ARTS

PULP READING COMP. FOR THE SAT

The following passage is an excerpt from the mass-market novel *Hot Flashes* by Barbara Raskin. Please read it carefully and answer the questions below.

Judy (who didn't marry until she was thirty-seven when she fell head over heels in love with Michael O'Leary, the writer-in-residence at BU where she taught) had been married only two years when Mike ran off with his previous wife's youngest daughter—a girl named Ginger—who came to stay with Judy and Mike while visiting colleges in the Boston area. Since Mike had only done the right "extended formerly-blended family" thing by accommodating his previous wife and allowing Ginger—who had been his stepdaughter for three years, five years earlier—to stay in his new home with his new wife, no one knew whom to blame. At least Ginger's mother had the decency to call Judy to apologize profusely and even suggested that if they worked together, they might successfully uncouple that unnatural couple—a suggestion that Judy politely declined despite the distraught mother's hysteria about her daughter not going to college.

1) Which is the best title for this passage?

a) "A Girl Named Ginger"
b) "Smart Women—Foolish Choices"
c) "Blame It On Boston"
d) "Canada—Our Friendly Neighbor to the North"
e) "These Tangled Eighties"

2) The mood created by the author is one of

a) confusion
b) puzzlement
c) uncertainty
d) bewilderment
e) perplexity

3) What is the main idea expressed by the author?

a) That old people shouldn't get married
b) That Judy's mom and Ginger's mom are friends
c) That Mike is a writer
d) That both Judy and Ginger have been victimized, not only by Mike, but by a society that prizes beauty and youth above all other qualities—including a Boston University education
e) I don't know

4) "That unnatural couple" (line 12) refers to

a) Mike and Ginger
b) Ginger and Judy
c) Mike, Judy, and Ginger
d) Ginger, Judy, Mike, and Scraps, Judy's dog from a previous marriage
e) the author and her publisher

5) Judging from the passage, the reader can conclude that

a) Almost anything is better than going to college in Boston
b) Judy is a head-case from way back
c) After reading this passage in the book, you would have to flip back to this page several times before finally remembering which is Judy and which is Ginger
d) Mike and Ginger will soon be appearing on *Geraldo*
e) I don't know

6) Which would best describe the relationship between Mike and Ginger?

a) Father-Daughter
b) "Uncle-Niece"
c) Kissing Cousins
d) Just good friends
e) Soulmates

7) All of the following are blurbs for the novel EXCEPT

a) "Filled with laughter, tears, love, and hate . . . like life itself!"
b) "Funny, sad, perceptive, and outrageous . . . *Hot Flashes sizzles*!"
c) Barbara Raskin is one funny lady . . . I laughed until I cried, and laughed some more!"
d) "Touching, bawdy, and so true it hurts . . . *Hot Flashes* delivers the goods—and how!"
e) "A megawatt express train of daredevil action!"

—by Chris Marcil and Sam Johnson. Reprinted from the October 1988 issue of Metro *magazine (NYC). Used with permission.*

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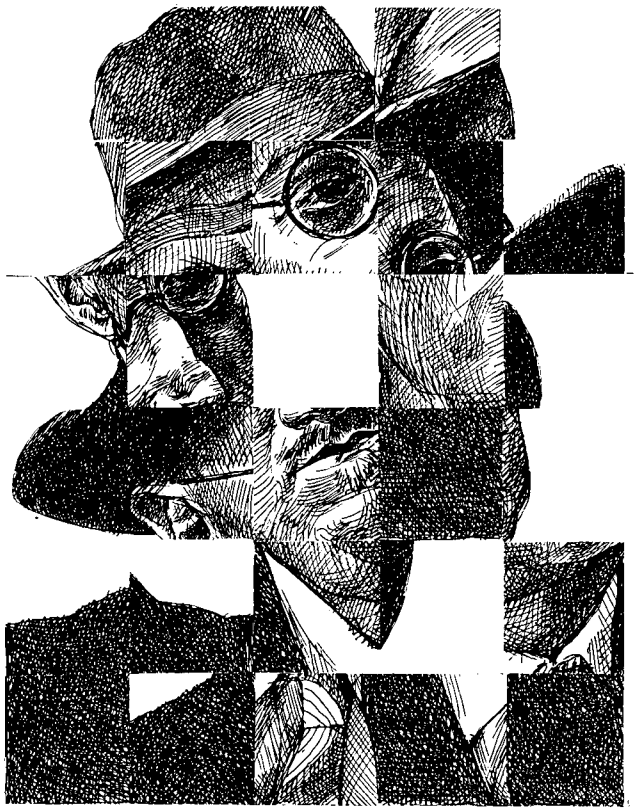
Publishers and Sinners

by E. Christian Kopff



The misadventures of James Joyce's *Ulysses* at the hands of publishers and editors has recently been in the news. Many of the commentators seem to believe that what Joyce suffered was unusual, and that most contemporary authors are treated better. Listen to Thomas Marc Parrott (writing in 1934) on George Bernard Shaw:

> Mr. Shaw, for instance, when he is ready to publish a play contracts for its appearance with a publisher, sends him a neatly typed manuscript, receives several sets of proof which he carefully corrects, and finally sees his work given to the world in a printed form as nearly accurate as human ingenuity and care can make it.

But Shaw is the exception. Some authors are partially to blame, because they engage in substantial rewriting of their books in proof. When they are supposed to be correcting printers' slips, they are in fact adding pages and even chapters to the work. Often, however, it is the publishers and their editorial staff who are at fault.

Since we possess Joyce's handwritten copy of *Ulysses* (the Rosenbach manuscript), and it has been published in a fine, legible photographic reproduction, you would think that establishing Joyce's text would be short and easy work. Unfortunately, Joyce rewrote most of the book while it was being typed for the printers and then again in proof, adding such famous passages as Molly Bloom's monologue that ends the book. Only 14 percent of the Rosenbach manuscript ended up as is in the first edition of *Ulysses*, and one-third of the text is brand new. One typist gave up on deciphering Joyce's handwriting, while the husband of another threw part of the manuscript into the fire in a fit of anger. The book was set up in type in Dijon, France by a team of 26 French typesetters, none of whom knew English or ever learned to read Joyce's distinctive handwriting. Such easy and common words as "Hackney cabs" and "wife" were transmogrified into "Stackney cass" and "urbe." Joyce suffered from poor eyesight and missed many mistakes. To make matters worse, a friend who helped him introduced his own changes into the text. The first edition was a typographical disaster, and a slip apologizing for the misprints was inserted. Some errors were removed, but more (estimated at 1,700) were added over the years. This already complicated summary considerably simplifies the whole story.

The first American edition, published with a great deal of huffing and puffing from Random House about its courageous stand against censorship, was taken not from a corrected version of the first edition, but from a pirated

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American edition. "It was one of the more notable scandals since Gutenberg started it all," in the words of text critic Jack Dalton. It included such famous misprints as the one describing Buck Mulligan on page 2: "He pointed his finger in friendly jest and went over the parapet, laughing to himself." In 1961, after a generation of mockery, Random House published a new edition, which it advertised as "scrupulously corrected." That edition was a reprint of the 1936 Bodley Head edition, called "final and definitive" because literary critic Stuart Gilbert had read over the proofs and written Joyce about a few difficult points he'd noticed. Jack Dalton estimated that the 1936 edition contained nearly 4,000 misprints, and the 1961 edition added a few of its own. "It was the kind of book you could use only a few minutes in a chemistry lab before blowing the place up." This is the text Americans have been reading and writing about for the past generation.

Many will agree that America had by now done enough in its courageous battle to give Joyce's *Ulysses* to the world. Now it was Germany's turn. A Munich professor named Hans Walter Gabler decided it was time to show up American and British incompetence. He put all the evidence for *Ulysses*, handwritten copy, typescript, prepublication serializations, proofs, first edition, whatever, onto a computer. The computer could print all the variants in words, spellings, and punctuation; it could also print out Joyce's true text, by leaving out bypassed or mistaken variants. In 1984 Garland Publishing put out this double edition, and in 1986 Random House in America and Bodley Head in England published the second part as "The Corrected Text." The dream of the 20th century was finally achieved. The omniscient computer had finally replaced fallible man.

Fans of Stanley Kubrick's *2001* may see this coming. Let me briefly run down the two main problems with the corrected edition. First: garbage in, garbage out. The collection of variants had been made by human beings from photographic copies. The French typesetters and even stray pencil markings had the same status as corrections made by James Joyce. These slips were not only collected as variants, but printed as the corrected text. John Kidd has collected a few in *The New York Review of Books* (June 30, 1988). Second: how does a computer distinguish between variants that are mere slips, those that are Joyce's first idea before he changed his mind, and those that he wanted to appear in *Ulysses*? Answer: it can't. That requires human intervention, based on logic and a feeling for style. Hans Walter Gabler no doubt ranks above a provincial French typesetter in his knowledge of idiomatic English, but he ranks below many American, British, and Irish readers and critics.

The good news is that anyone with access to a major research library knows a great deal more about *Ulysses* than was known to previous generations. The bad news is that every edition of the novel substantially misrepresents the work. Every work *os exegesis* and much literary criticism written about Joyce has been and continues to be based on seriously defective texts. Critics may prate all they wish about a "close, careful reading of the text," but no valid text exists. It must be reconstructed by every reader. Naturally, this will not affect Joyce's university-level teachers and critics, as one letter writer to *The New York Times* frankly admitted. They use Joyce's text to preach their views on human freedom and love, and the actual words he wrote are not allowed to affect the use they make of his book. The "theorists" who run our English departments and the PMLA wouldn't care if Molly ended her famous monologue with "No I said No I won't No!" They would still have their will of her and of Joyce's novel.

Nor do the publishers care. The various Random House editions, until they switched over to the Gabler text, all began with the pontifications of lawyer Morris L. Ernst and Judge John M. Woolsey on Random House's heroic role in freeing the world from censorship. (From censorship, that is, based on legislative enactment, on due process and the will of the people, however imperfectly represented. Random House had no problem with censoring poems of Robinson Jeffers in the 40's, because they seemed to criticize the foreign policy of the New Deal.) In fact, Bennett Cerf and the boys at Random House cared not a whit for the text of *Ulysses*. Although they could have used a corrected version of the first edition, which only suffered from 2,000 misprints or so, they wantonly used an irresponsible, pirated edition with thousands more errors. This choice seems especially comical if you read the letter from Joyce that follows the judicial decision in the various American editions printed before 1986. In it Joyce specifically protests against pirated editions.

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Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's did not just rewrite and butcher Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe. He was proud of his work—although he never wrote a line on his own that attracted the attention of either critics or the general public.

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Random House is part of a long and glorious tradition. Consider the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament, edited by Erasmus. Erasmus and his Basel publisher, Froben, knew that a group of scholars in Alcala, Spain were involved in a careful and expensive edition. They decided to beat them to the punch. Unfortunately, Basel did not possess many manuscripts of the New Testament. Erasmus ignored the one good one, because it disagreed with the more numerous bad ones. When none of the Basel manuscripts contained the end of Revelation, he re-translated his own Latin transmission, done over a period of years from various manuscripts, into Greek. Nor was this the only Erasmian Greek inserted into the text. After the work was published, Erasmus went about boasting of his devotion to God's Word. He and Bennett Cerf would have had a good night out together.

The stories of what publishers have done to authors would fill many pages. When Thomas Hardy's *Return of*

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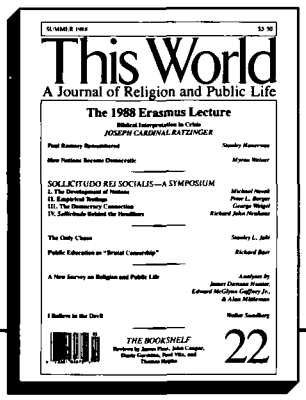
the Native was published in America, Harper removed an entire page to make it fit their format. Hardy later substantially revised the text of the novel. Not only did his new version not show up on American bookshelves for a quarter century, but the American publisher kept on reprinting the truncated version. Winston Churchill substantially revised his *History of the Second World War* in proof. This delayed publication. The American publisher got tired of waiting and sent the book to press before Sir Winston was finished.

A prime example of what publishers do is furnished by Stephen Crane's misadventures with Ripley Hitchcock, his editor at Appleton. Crane had published *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* himself. Appleton accepted *The Red Badge of Courage*, but Hitchcock removed an entire chapter and much material from other chapters, especially from the last one. The book's effect was now much fuzzier than in Crane's manuscript. Appleton next agreed to publish *Maggie*, but eliminated significant material, including an unpleasant meeting with a fat man that directly precedes Maggie's suicide. The result was to make the reasons for her death unclear. The standard editions of Crane's works continue to reprint the Appleton editions, and the standard criticism often glories in their "ambiguities." Crane's version of *The Red Badge of Courage* was first published in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* by Hershel Parker, because more scholarly avenues of publication were denied it.

Not one of Thomas Wolfe's books ever appeared in the form he wrote it, and much of his posthumous books consists of printed matter concocted by his editor.

Sometimes there is a happy ending. To get his first novel published, John Barth was forced by his publisher to rewrite the end of *The Floating Opera*. After the success of *The Sot-Weed Factor* and *Giles Goat-Boy*, he got his own version of *Floating Opera* published. Had he died before doing so, scholars would have continued to write about the publisher's preferences and not the author's.

We know about the treatment of Joyce, Hardy, Wolfe, *et al.* because they are famous writers and have been the subjects of special study. But the same thing happens to most writers of fiction, nonfiction, and textbooks. Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's did not just rewrite and butcher Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe. He was proud of his work—although he never wrote a line on his own that attracted the attention of either critics or the general public. Bennett Cerf not only propagated a disastrous pirated edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* in a cruel parody of Joyce's own wishes, but he had the gall to boast of his contribution to 20th-century literature. How often have teams of award-winning teachers seen their textbooks rewritten by someone of no academic stature as part of an effort to fit marketing reports prepared on the basis of inadequate or just plain mistaken pedagogical notions? These Nurse Ratchets not only arrange for a frontal lobotomy, they then get consultants to confirm how much happier you are after the operation. That is why, Gentle Reader, we recommend that you devote your reading time to the classics of the ancient world. They have only suffered from several thousand years of misprints and miscopying, the collapse of Rome and Byzantium, and the death of the languages they were written in. They were never edited by Maxwell Perkins and published by Bennett Cerf. ◈



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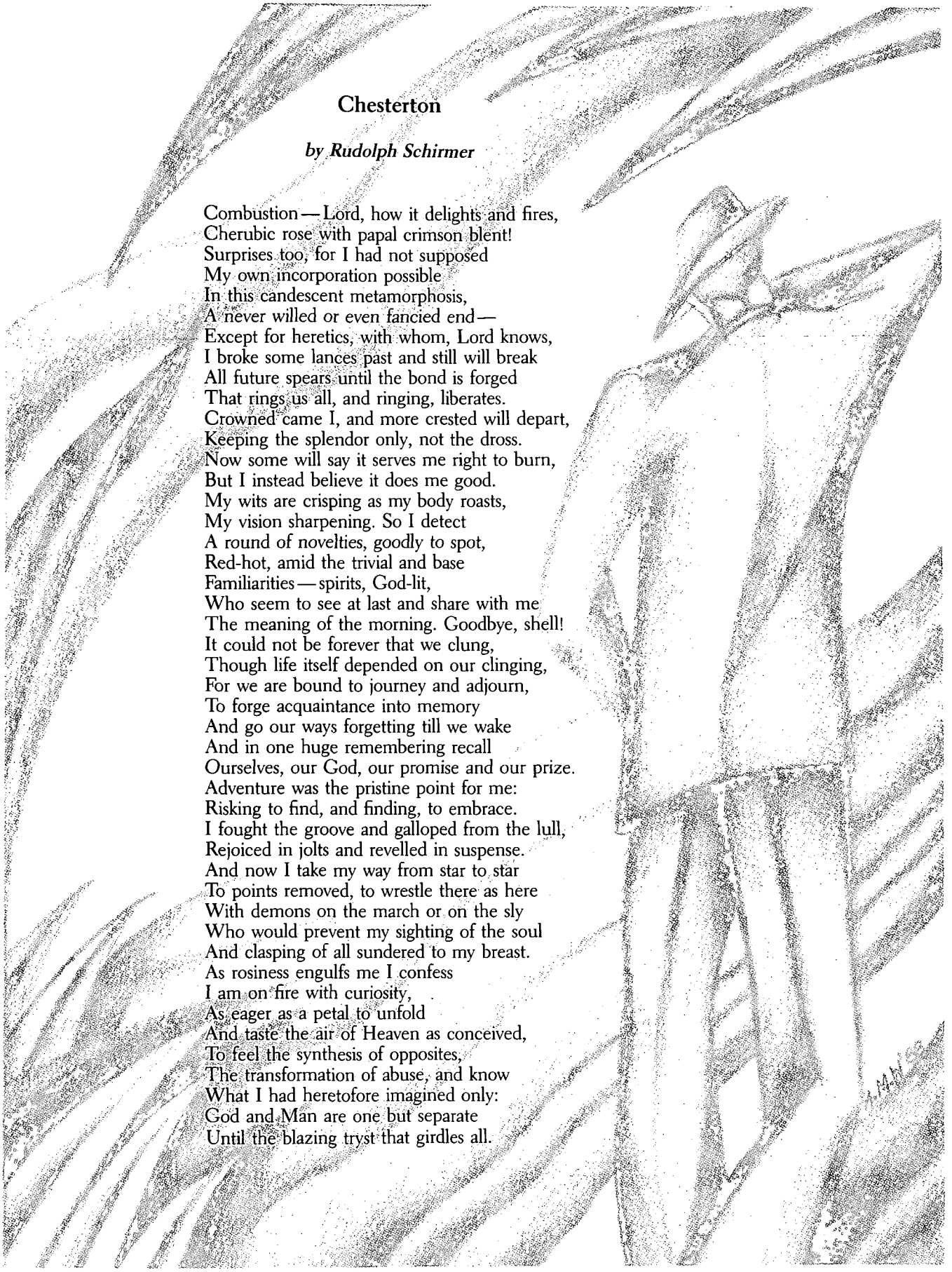

Chesterton

by Rudolph Schirmer

Combustion—Lord, how it delights and fires,
Cherubic rose with papal crimson blent!
Surprises too, for I had not supposed
My own incorporation possible
In this candescent metamorphosis,
A never willed or even fancied end—
Except for heretics, with whom, Lord knows,
I broke some lances past and still will break
All future spears until the bond is forged
That rings us all, and ringing, liberates.
Crowned came I, and more crested will depart,
Keeping the splendor only, not the dross.
Now some will say it serves me right to burn,
But I instead believe it does me good.
My wits are crisping as my body roasts,
My vision sharpening. So I detect
A round of novelties, goodly to spot,
Red-hot, amid the trivial and base
Familiarities—spirits, God-lit,
Who seem to see at last and share with me
The meaning of the morning. Goodbye, shell!
It could not be forever that we clung,
Though life itself depended on our clinging,
For we are bound to journey and adjourn,
To forge acquaintance into memory
And go our ways forgetting till we wake
And in one huge remembering recall
Ourselves, our God, our promise and our prize.
Adventure was the pristine point for me:
Risking to find, and finding, to embrace.
I fought the groove and galloped from the lull,
Rejoiced in jolts and revelled in suspense.
And now I take my way from star to star
To points removed, to wrestle there as here
With demons on the march or on the sly
Who would prevent my sighting of the soul
And clasping of all sundered to my breast.
As rosiness engulfs me I confess
I am on fire with curiosity,
As eager as a petal to unfold
And taste the air of Heaven as conceived,
To feel the synthesis of opposites,
The transformation of abuse, and know
What I had heretofore imagined only:
God and Man are one but separate
Until the blazing tryst that girdles all.

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Books and Book Reviewing, or Why All Press Is Good Press

by Katherine Dalton

When Bob Woodward published *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA*, in October of 1987, two things made that book news. One was his assertion that William Casey, the late director of the CIA, had admitted to knowing about the transfer of funds in the Iran-contra deal. The other was the skepticism over Woodward's claim to have interviewed Casey in the hospital. Casey's widow and daughter insisted that one or the other of them was with Casey almost all the time he was recovering from brain surgery, when Woodward says he visited, and that in any case Casey was too sick to have had substantive conversations with anyone — much less with a hostile journalist. Woodward would provide no details, but stuck to his story.

With the prepublication of several chapters in *Newsweek*, the *Veil* controversy had broken by the time David C. Martin came out with his review in *The New York Times Book Review* on October 18. Martin, CBS News' Pentagon correspondent, was reviewing a highly-touted book about a top-secret subject on page one of the *Book Review*. The crux of the matter had to be whether or not Woodward was lying about the biggest revelations in his book. Surely addressing that would make up the heart of Martin's review.

But that is not the heart of Martin's review. The heart of Martin's review goes like this:

> . . . the revelations are not what is so captivating about this book, which reads much better in full length than in the excerpts which have appeared in newspapers and magazines. The revelations are merely the bold strokes in a penetrating, profane and sometimes brilliant portrait of what textbooks dryly call "the intelligence community."

Elsewhere he writes, "Mr. Woodward, an assistant managing editor of The Washington Post, has got into the belly of the beast. It's all here . . ."

This unstinting praise, a page one rave for a book that would go on to be a best-seller. Martin does have some quibbles — but after those laudatory sentences, how serious can they be? How "extensively did Mr. Woodward rely on the word of a man for whom 'to lie was nothing'?" Martin asks. It is a question he cannot answer. After faulting Woodward for a few mistakes, and dismissing them as "small matters," he does wonder if Woodward substantiated more vital parts of his story. But Martin gets no further than wondering; CBS's man on the scene at the Pentagon has no evidence that Woodward has or has not double-checked. Martin's praise is concrete, but with his questions we are just left hanging.

Martin's was only one of the 2,000 or so book reviews that *The New York Times Book Review* publishes every year. As there are problems in this lead *Times* review, so are there problems in the shorter *Times* reviews, and as *The New York Times* is the nation's most influential reviewer (with the sole exception, in academic circles, of *The New York Review of Books*), so the problems it has are universal.

There is nothing peculiar about Martin's review; this is what reviewing is like. Maybe it's laziness more than anything; Martin's review is clearly an oak-paneled-room job — no legwork here — though as a CBS correspondent surely he has resources, some way of looking into this little problem of questionable credibility. If that's not the reason,

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there's also cronydom, the unwillingness to criticize a fellow celebrity journalist, especially when it's his word against that of the grieving widow of the late CIA director. Or maybe Martin is simply imbued with the modern notion that every bit of journalism must be balanced: a quibble here, yes, but oh, the merits . . .

Poor, benighted book reviewing—it's been in bad odor for a good 300 years, or ever since the first English-language review, the *Historical Account of Books and Transactions in the Learned World*, came out in Edinburgh in 1688.

During the late 18th century publishers paid to have their books reviewed. The venality of the business was notorious, and journalism in general was no place for gentlemen. In his *History of England*, Horace Walpole wrote that "as late as 1808, the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn made a bye-law excluding all persons who had written for the daily papers from being called to the Bar." Such a climate was one of the reasons why Sydney Smith and Francis Jeffrey and the other founders of the famous *Edinburgh Review* (1802) did not sign their articles.

Modern problems are a little different. But venality comes in all varieties, and is always happy to modernize. If people are no longer penning their own reviews, the way Poe did ("works of the most notable character"), and Whitman of course ("An American bard at last!"), and even Conrad Aiken (who was quite harsh with himself), they are still reviewing their friends. One of the few positive reviews Jay McInerney (of *Bright Lights, Big City* fame) got for his new novel, *Story of My Life*, was written by his friend P.J. O'Rourke in *The Wall Street Journal* back in September. ("I liked it a lot," said O'Rourke when questioned about the propriety of reviewing a friend's book. "But its subject will bring out the envious and puritanical streak in most reviewers. So I reviewed it as a favor to the book, not Jay.") In a piece he wrote for *The New York Times*, one of its daily reviewers, John Leonard, spoke very frankly about reviewing a friend's book. "I try to give it a good review," he said. "If I don't like the way his mind works, why is he my friend?"

Spy magazine has a running monthly feature called "Logrolling," which chronicles an ongoing series of mutual admiration societies: John Cheever and John Updike, Gore Vidal and Italo Calvino, Anthony Burgess and Robertson Davies, with special notice to D.M. Thomas and Erica Jong. "A tour de force," Thomas wrote of her *Serenissima*. "A treat for Erica Jong's legion of readers." And she in return praised his *Summit* by writing it "will delight and amuse even Thomas's most devoted readers. I am one." Clearly, if before folks did their logrolling anonymously, now they do it in public.

One of the last bastions of anonymity, the London *Times Literary Supplement*, only started running signed reviews in June of 1974. It was one of the major decisions its new editor, John Gross, made. He stated, in an editorial explaining the change, that for him the "principle of personal accountability comes first," i.e., authors have to stand by what they have written, and stand by it publicly. But as he also pointed out, you could argue just as well that anonymity helped ensure honesty: "When critics write under their own name, or so the argument runs, they are liable to be inhibited by all kinds of social and personal considerations from saying exactly what they feel."

We are not suffering, in the book business, from too much honesty. It is all this admiration that's the problem. Long gone is the day when Byron could say, even facetiously, that Keats was killed by an article. (Both *Blackwood's Magazine* and the more respectable and restrained *Quarterly Review* blasted *Endymion* in 1818.) Compare Francis Jeffrey's famous piece on Wordsworth in the *Edinburgh Review*, which began so archly, "This will never do," with the carefully worded caveats in the *Times*.

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In a piece he wrote for *The New York Times*, one of its daily reviewers, John Leonard, spoke very frankly about reviewing a friend's book. "I try to give it a good review," he said. "If I don't like the way his mind works, why is he my friend?"

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Think of the *Times* taking up the *Edinburgh Review*'s motto: *judex damnatur cum nocens absovitur*, or "the judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted." It strains the imagination. In an effort to be "balanced," *Times* reviewers will often couch their criticism in so much fluff that any caveat gets suffocated, even when the problems are major; *Veil* is the perfect example. What would have been biting, perhaps even *ad hominem*, criticism in the *Edinburgh Review* or *Blackwood's* or Poe's *Broadway Journal* is, in the *Times*, an oppressive lack of enthusiasm. That's it. And as I've mentioned, as *The New York Times Book Review* goes, so goes the rest of the nation.

All this has something to do with the modern notion of journalistic "objectivity," with the idea that there is some way of reporting a story or providing cultural coverage that is "completely fair" and "unbiased," and that this is done by presenting "both sides." The *Times* would never countenance the idea that it is and should admit to reviewing—or reporting—from a certain point of view; it is the nation's chronicler and, everywhere but the editorial page, cleanly nonpartisan.

Newspapers and magazines didn't always assume this mantle of objectivity and restraint. "Treasure this maxim in your thoughts for ever: A critic must be just as well as clever," wrote Sir Alexander Boswell, in an "Epistle to the Edinburgh reviewers" he published in 1803. Byron wrote his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" in reaction to a patronizing notice in the *Edinburgh Review*. He fought fire with fire: "I too can hunt a Poetaster down" he says in his closing lines. Coleridge was quite bitter about the treatment he received. "For as long as there are readers to be delighted

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with calumny there will be found reviewers to calumniate," he wrote in *Biographia Literaria*. Many of these attacks had a political basis. One of the reasons for the *Edinburgh Review*'s critiques of Wordsworth and Coleridge and even its friend and contributor Walter Scott was political; the *Review* was Whig, and they were Tories. When the Tory *Blackwood's Magazine* awarded Keats a diploma from Leigh Hunt's "Cockney school" of poetry, it may have had something to do with the fact that Keats was the son of a stable keeper; on the other hand, when Jeffrey championed Keats in the *Edinburgh Review* it was more because of that same association with Hunt, than because of the poetry.

I am not suggesting that we return to the days when the London *Times*' editor Thomas Barnes ordered an attack on *The Oration of Demosthenes Upon the Crown*, by his former friend Henry Lord Brougham (who'd begun his literary career at the *Edinburgh Review*), which ran over five separate days and 20,000 words—longer than the book itself. But there is something to the argument that a review that is against nothing can't be for much. As Edgar Allan Poe put it (in a magazine piece), "As far as I can understand the 'loving our enemies,' it implies the hating our friends."

Today you can tell a paper that is willing to take a stand not from its willingness to praise, but from its willingness to blame. In America the only publications that will take a stand on a book are the ones that acknowledge their partisanship. *The Wall Street Journal*'s arts page editor Raymond Sokolov wrote a harsh review of Tama Janowitz's *Slaves of New York*, a book that received more than the usual hype in 1987. *The Village Voice* ran a similar piece reviewing Janowitz's next book (along with Bret "Less Than Zero" Ellis's second novel). But the *Journal* and the *Voice* have the advantage of being openly partisan papers. No one expects a *Journal* or *Voice* editorial to be "objective"—both papers will make the best case they can for their respective conservative or lefty-New York City Democrat points of view. And that freedom to be partisan spills over into the arts pages.

The same holds for *The New York Review of Books*. The left-wing *New York Review* is freer to love and hate than the *Times*, and runs longer reviews and takes longer to write them, which means an occasional article is more in-depth. In the case of the Woodward book, in the *New York Review* Thomas Powers pointed out, as Martin in the *Times* did not, that this famous final scene with Casey, even as Woodward reported it, was at best inconclusive. Powers also took a harder look at Woodward's sources. Nonetheless, Powers praised the book in general, which would be expected from a magazine of the same ideological bent as Woodward, and happy to take his credentials at their face value, as sufficient proof of his uprightness.

The final, essential problem with reviewing is not that *The New York Times* is partial in its less-than-thorough way, or that it gives books to review to people who are competitors, or that its reviewers occasionally out-and-out admit (as one did of a biography about the Bingham family of Louisville) that they have no way of checking the book's premise or historical accuracy. The problem, especially with the *Times*, is that it has no equal as a tastemaker. Martin's review of *Veil* was the single review that mattered most. "[T]here is a prevalent feeling that if your star book has not been reviewed in either the daily or Sunday *Times*, it has not been reviewed, period," wrote Richard Kluger, president of the small trade house Charterhouse, back in 1973. That is just as true, if not more so, today.

Forget cronyism, reviews by interested parties, brown-nosing, and even laziness. Next to this monopoly on taste all other problems are nothing. And what is strangest about the *Times* is that this is institutional clout; people remember Smith and Jeffrey because they made the *Edinburgh Review*, but Christopher Lehman-Haupt and Anatole Broyard because the *Times* made them.

Which brings me back, one last time, to Martin's review of *Veil*. He concludes with a piece of advice to Mrs. Casey:

> Casey's widow claims the deathbed scene never took place and that her late husband was too much a patriot to reveal secrets to a journalist or speak ill of the President. She is a poignant figure, blindsided in her mourning by a hard-nosed reporter, but Sophia Casey has been too quick to denounce what is largely a sympathetic portrait . . .

Martin is saying, isn't he? that even if Mrs. Casey is convinced that Woodward is *lying*, she should be glad that her husband is "sympathetically" drawn. This whole business of Woodward's book and its surrounding hoopla is not about "ethics"—not to Martin. This is Washington, after all, where (he chides Mrs. Casey) "ethics" are extraneous. What's a bit of misrepresentation when you get top billing in Bob Woodward's first draft of history?

The Fourth Annual Erasmus Lecture

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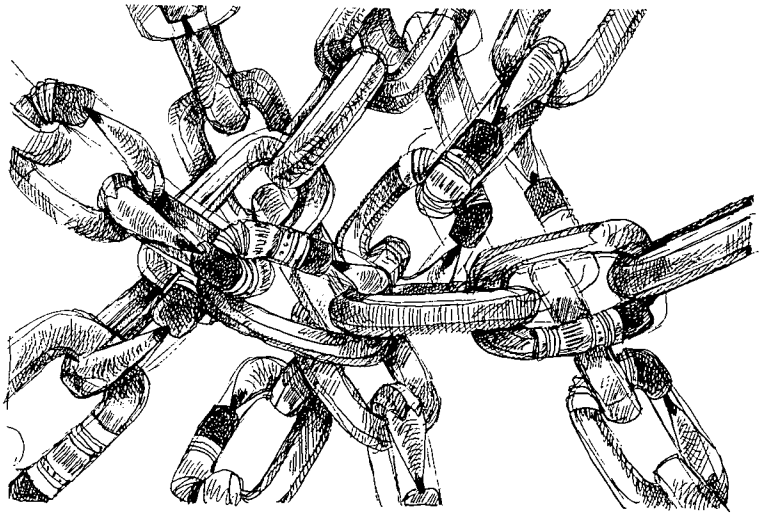
Writers' Unions

by Momcilo Selic



"PEN international is working for your release," my lawyer told me. In the bare, mean interview room of the Belgrade District Prison he smiled at me, and I smiled back, because the mikes could not pick *that* up. There were no TV cameras there, yet, to monitor our winks and nods — the language of slaves, as Karl Marx so aptly termed it.

PEN international, based in London, headed by Michael Scammell and held together by Ms. Elisabeth Paterson, an administrative secretary, and Mrs. Kathleen Simson, the secretary of the Writers in Prison Committee, was actually applying for *my* release. Writers like Mario Vargas Llosa, Heinrich Böll, Arthur Miller, Alan Sillitoe, Josef Skvorecky, and others, I thought, were concerned with the freedom of a Yugoslav who had written a pamphlet against President Tito (a good friend of Heinrich Böll's at least).

My spirits rose. I paced in the darkness of my solitary swinging my arms, my US Army field jacket feeling like a steel breastplate. I sang, not too loudly (I'd heard the guards beating other prisoners for less). The tune was the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, vaguely remembered from my American grade school days. "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave," I whispered, "while his soul goes marching on!"

Though I was not in a grave, but in cell No. 10, right behind the blower unit, the thought of PEN being on my side — a boost even more powerful than adoption by Amnesty International — made me smile at the guards when they came to take me out for the walk. In the exercise yard, I trotted past them limbering my arms, glad of the snowflakes touching the concrete.

In 1984, after emigrating from Yugoslavia, I found myself in London, doing a videotape on Yugoslav dissidents for the AI. I phoned PEN international and tried to see at least Mrs. Simson, only to find out that PEN was a part-time, understaffed affair, not much different from the *Index on Censorship* — an outpost of Writers and Scholars International that helped harassed scribblers from totalitarian countries.

"Do you know," my interrogators in Yugoslavia told me, "that both the Amnesty International and the International PEN are nothing but CIA operations, in a Special War against Yugoslavia and other socialist countries?"

Much later, in America, I was cautioned that both PEN international and AI (not to mention the Writers and Scholars International) are leftist conspiracies, bent on toppling democracy in the West. I thought of Ian Parker and Hugh Poulton at the Yugoslav desk of AI, who poured over newspapers in Cyrillic, looking for names of "politicals"; of Melanie Anderson who had written me in exile, asking about other Yugoslavs hounded by The Imagination of the [Yugoslav] State; of the founder of Amnesty International, Peter Benenson, whose father had rooted for a Yugoslavia in 1918, confident that it would become another Switzerland, and I found it hard to see anything in what they were trying to do but a search for freedom.

And, if Mrs. Simson of the International PEN was a Communist agent — she who had taken my story about a Belgrade neighborhood to *Index on Censorship*, where Karel Kyncl, an exile from post-1968 Czechoslovakia, had published it, with a blessing from another Czech survivor, editor George Theiner — then I was a Communist agent too, despite anything Tomislav Tacic, the warden of the Zabela Penitentiary and a ranking member of UDBA (the Yugoslav secret police) might have thought.

"Selic," Tacic used to say, "you hate your people and you're a traitor to your family and class. Too bad they didn't give you more, like 15 years at least!"

Seven, however, was more than enough for me. I couldn't really hate Tacic because he was earnest: when I told him I liked Nietzsche, he respectfully listened to his subordinate, the warden of the quarantine, who informed

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him that Nietzsche had gone mad upon seeing a driver beat his horse.

Few people had ever been more suspicious of writers' unions (in the East often peopled by Tacic-approved hacks) than I, a so-called dissident writer and a *samizdat* publisher. The Writers' Club in No. 7 French Street, where Belgrade's rich and famous could sip spritzers and eat the best tripe in town, I hated with a passion. Writers, I thought, are either recluses or misfits, and shouldn't be hobnobbing with party bigwigs and UDBA thugs in a nationalized villa—unless they wished, one day, to exchange places with them.

My friend Djordje Babic was a true poet of Belgrade, but only I and a few of his childhood buddies knew it. Djordje never thought of publishing his two thick notebooks of verse, reluctant to tread anywhere near the Writers' Club. Nobody, either, knew of Ilija Nikitovic, a painter who, in the coal room where he lived, hovered over his miniatures of Vermeerian beauty. Gently he'd smile at me and say, "It took me a year to find out the right mixture for this varnish. Nobody else knows it, and few care." During the day, Ilija worked as a sign painter, not because he couldn't sell his pictures, but because he never even tried—at least not to the crowd at the Club, "Under the Lindens," the "Greenery," or the Municipal Cafe.

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Willy-nilly, writers—by the choice of their profession—are the seismographs of mankind. With truth and power directly proportional to their talent, honesty, and honor, they tell us, often to their own dismay, where the big ones are rolling from.

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So, how was I to square what I knew from Belgrade with PEN international, the Writers and Scholars International, the *Index*, or any other organization of artists promoting an agenda? When a Belgrade Committee for the Defense of Freedom of Thought and Expression wrote in the summer of 1988: "All the leading figures of the Second World War (Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Hitler) have after their death been assigned their place in history, yet the political role of the late President [Tito] of Yugoslavia has still not been placed within the objective historical context," was I to forget their silence when Tito was still alive?

If the Belgrade revolutionary chic was anything as I remembered it, then Milan Komnenic—a poet who had been the state's witness against Gojko Djogo (a fellow poet and a premature, unauthorized Tito-scoffer)—could be expected to bare his breast in public, like a *guerrillero* in the Goya painting. And, true to stereotype, that's what he did: he gave a fiery speech against the Albanian writers for supporting their national interests, instead of the Serbs'. In No. 7 French Street Komnenic—long-time editor of a major government-controlled publishing house—had finally acted brave, behind the bulwarks of the Serbian Writers' Union.

Still, aside from the nonliterary, bureaucratic language of the *Proposal for a Free and Critical Reexamination of Josip Broz Tito's Historical Role*, and Komnenic's (and others') political past, I perceived their organized action as a welcome attempt to reclaim at least some of the honor and the dignity of a profession, if not of its practitioners.

But it was very hard for me to join my approval of a call to the barricades in Yugoslavia with what went on at the 1986 PEN International Congress in New York. There E.L. Doctorow denounced Secretary of State George Schultz as the representative of "the most ideologically right-wing administration this country has yet seen," while the president of the congress, Norman Mailer, proclaimed that the "neurotic giants" of the USSR *and* the US were both nothing but "drunken parents," spawning terrorists.

I do not know whether Doctorow ever perceived himself a Vaclav Havel, signing a Charter 77 in New York (I am fairly confident that he never heard of Milan Komnenic); or whether Norman Mailer imagined himself a Solzhenitsyn, or fancied his *Marilyn* comparable to Miklos Harazsty's *The Velvet Prison* (written out of Budapest), but somehow I felt that neither Mailer nor Doctorow (or even Carlos Fuentes) had ever gone to jail for words, else they would have certainly valued them more.

In my Eastern European mind there could be no comparison between anguish in freedom—even out of impotence—and the mandated suffocation of writers in Belgrade, Budapest, or Moscow. In the US, I've seen Carlos Fuentes speak against America to Bill Moyers on American PBS (in impeccable, American-educated English), and I watched Solzhenitsyn snubbed and calumnied by the American media, while a William B. Hoffman sang paeans to homosexual AIDS victims in *The New York Times Book Review*; but none of that could, ever, be juxtaposed to even the plight of Milan Komnenic, in a "differently communist" Yugoslavia.

To me, coming from a place where my UDBA interrogator talked *belles lettres* as he played with the shiny brass button of his corporate navy blue blazer, Mailer's professional and humanitarian concern for Jack Abbott sounded strange, next to my knowledge of novelist Dragoslav Mihajlovic's seven years on the Adriatic Naked Island Punitive and Correction Camp, for "activities against the people and the state." Watching the men he knew disappear one by one—either at sea, their corpses weighted with marble slabs, or into a hidden cemetery, with undressed, unmarked marble headstones over some of the graves, teenage Mihajlovic suffered his personal (and national) truth, art, and salvation in solitude and silence.

Like, I suppose, all human institutions, writers' unions are no better than their members. To a George Theiner at the Writers and Scholars International, or a Michael Scammell and a Mrs. Simson at PEN international, or a Phil Balla at the American PEN's Freedom to Write

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Committee, there are the Atwoods, Doctorows, Mailers, and others, contaminating any effort at genuine being. When I drank a can of Guinness with Hugh Poulton in his run-down London apartment I was fairly sure I'd never see him on a snapshot of anything glitzy. An Amnesty International researcher, Poulton was interested in fine, grayly-shaded things, hard to scream out by a Sting, or a Bruce Springsteen, during one of their AI fundraising concerts.

Whether in the East or the West, writers and other artists do create and choose sides. If the members of the Serbian Writers' Union said and did nothing in the Tito era, they—like Gabriel García Márquez in poet Armando Valladares's case—were supporting a political agenda simply by having chosen to become public figures. Publishing, to me, entailed nothing less than an attempt to be a hero, at least in front of others.

The mechanics of swarming, in Belgrade as well as New York, produce predictable results. When Philip Roth said that in contemporary Western culture "nothing matters and everything goes," while in the East "nothing goes and everything matters," he may have thought of Osip Mandelstam and his wife's *Hope Against Hope*. Writing, after all, is communication, as is gathering in a writers' union. Gerard Godin, the separatist Québecois poet-politician put it this way: "We had to communicate with the English [Canadians] with bombs, for them to realize just how we felt about the whole question of Quebec."

What, unfortunately, binds names like García Márquez's (or Nicaraguan Rosario Murillo's) to Goebbels's in an unholy, timeless, unconstituted Writers' Alliance is an obsession with something more than the power of beauty: like novelist Mile Budak (the Minister of Cults of the Nazi-dominated Independent State of Croatia), Hitler, the defunct artist, ended up watching his enemies die, their necks stretched and lacerated by piano wire. And, fittingly, it was Milovan Djilas who said to me, as we walked down an empty Belgrade boulevard (he stopping from time to time to see if anyone was tailing us): "You, as I, are interested as much in politics as in literature. The two are somewhat inseparable."

Indeed. Every communist government knows this and every Western writer laments it. Politics also—as Gerard Godin never quite said—is communication: selling others on your own priorities, or, even worse, being sold on the priorities of others as your very own. The problem, if there is one, is not in politics versus poetics, or in ideological writers as opposed to *l'art-pour-l'artistes*, but in men who write as they live (and live only so long as they write) and those who, like Vsevolod Kochetov of the Soviet Writers' Union, *use* art as a tool—or a weapon—to win. The issue is not in Writers' Alliances, but in writers whose vanity and appetite dwarf their work.

"When I drive around upstate New York," observed Nadine Gordimer (a prominent member of PEN international), "I drive past mobile homes and wonder: 'Who are these people?' I don't meet them in American fiction."

True communicators and politicos, even if unrevealed as such to themselves, need to preen and strut among peers. "Writers I admire, like Raymond Carver," said Salman Rushdie, "write out of disgust with the corrosion of this country [the US] and so write very small and circumscribed stories. There's a suspicion of scale. These tiny fictions are a way of reconstructing values from the ground up."

Rushdie, like Doctorow, has chosen his side. I suppose that reconstructing values (or upkeeping the honored ones) is what Mary Lee Settle, Walker Percy, Wendell Berry, and some other Americans have been doing, while mostly ignored by the American literary establishment. Not content with stitch work on the Gobelins of minor fiction, hermetic poetry, or hackwork, members of no movement, writers' union, or *Bund*, Garrett, Chappell, Lytle, and some of their students have made their choice. Taking their lumps as they come—as Canadians Margaret Atwood and Timothy Findley sneeringly bask in the praise of New York—these archetypal Americans work on, confident that no one will have to bail them out of any prison—velvet, concrete, or even like Jack Abbott's.

Willy-nilly, writers—by the choice of their profession—are the seismographs of mankind. With truth and power directly proportional to their talent, honesty, and honor, they tell us, often to their own dismay, where the big ones are rolling from. As readers, we also have the freedom of choice: to mind the beeps of Brodkeys, Mary Morrises, or Rosellen Browns, or to scramble to the true howls (not Ginsberg's) of Babels, Keseys, or Bulgakovs, all screaming with thousands—even millions—of lives not entirely their own.

PEN international, PEN American Center (and their Freedom to Write Committee), US Helsinki Watch's Committee for the Defense of Journalists, even New York congresses titled The Writer's Imagination and the Imagination of the State; committees to free Mihajlo Mihajlov, Adem Demaci, or Ivan Klima; Nobel Prizes for literature given to Ivo Andric, Boris Pasternak (for his *Dr. Zhivago, not* for his poems), and withheld from Jorge Luis Borges, or Ezra Pound—are all inescapable, at least as long as East European secret policemen wear gold-rimmed glasses and dress like executives.

"Selic," I was told by my UDBA interrogator, "why did you have to write your, whatever, this week, and make me miss the closing of the Belgrade Film Festival?"

I, for one, am certainly more than grateful to Michael Scammell and Mrs. Kathleen Simson of the International PEN for having helped me get out, and stay out, of the Zabela Punitive and Correctional Home in eastern Serbia. A new PEN International Congress is scheduled for 1989 in Canada (will Godin attend?), to be equally subdivided between Toronto and Montreal, in answer to the bickering between the English- and French-speaking PEN's. Even if Pierre Elliot Trudeau does not address the distinguished audience—as he did in New York, in 1986—Margaret Atwood certainly will, to explain to everyone just how devilish America is.

So let her. Unless American writers disprove Sven Delblanc of Sweden ("You don't have any truly great writers,") all the organizing—pro and con—will not help us any. Atwood and Delblanc will gain by default, with no one to blame but the inchoate, unincorporated brotherhood of other authors unwilling, or unable, to offer themselves to their truth. If, ultimately, our age offers no great art, which one will, and to whom? ◈

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Don't Quit Your Job to Raise a Litmag

by Jane Greer

"Poetry is the most overproduced commodity on the market, next to zucchini."
—Judson Jerome, *Writer's Digest*
poetry columnist since 1960

According to a 1985 study cited by Writer's Digest Books, 23.3 percent of all people who think of themselves as writers—or *"more than two million people"*—write poetry for publication.

It follows that there are then *six* million housewives and househusbands, stockbrokers and nurses, college professors and ranchers, who write short stories, novels, and, God help them, novelettes.

Eight million would-be writers.

The number of people who make a *living* writing fiction or poetry would fit into a phone booth. Along with hardcover copies of Joyce Carol Oates's *oeuvre*.

The rest of the "poets and other authors of unpopular literature," as Judson Jerome calls them, work at real jobs and send their spare-time literary efforts tirelessly to literary or "little" magazine (litmag) editors and independent publishers (the "small presses"), many of whom pay them in copies and little else. These publishers are "independent" in that their choice of material to publish has less to do with profit than with a passion for literature or for an idea.

(Hmmmm. Let's see. 1989 *Poet's Market* says that there are approximately 1,700 publishers of poetry, and 1989 *Writer's Market* sports 4,000 listings, some of which accept poetry. So let's say there are 5,000 markets—mostly independent publishers of books or litmags—for our eight million writers. That makes 1,600 writers per market. A quarterly litmag will publish maybe ten new writers in each issue, along with writers it's published before; that means it would take 160 quarterly issues, or 40 years, for American litmags to publish at least once all the writers writing *today*. By that time, if the trend continues, there will be far more writers. And the average lifespan of a litmag or independent press is generally far shy of 40.)

What's in this for anyone?

The deep psychic scars faced by independent editors, publishers, bookkeepers, marketers, subsidizers (usually the same person for any given press), and submittors to these markets seem about evenly distributed. People who gather the courage to send a short story or batch of poems to a litmag editor face postage costs (both ways) that can be debilitating if the sender is broke and his output prodigious. A lot of money—and worse, a lot of hope—can be squandered on the *wrong* markets if the sender doesn't study the listings in places such as *Poet's Market*, *Writer's Market*, or *The Writer*, or if magazines and houses aren't honest or clear, in their listings, about what they want. Some independent publishers *are* quite blunt in their listings, and say things like "backlogged through January 1990 issue," "New Age or Aquarian, nature and animals (rights/liberation), the Inner or Spiritual Life," or "the work and ideas of lesbians of color, Jewish lesbians, fat lesbians, lesbians over 50 and under 20 years old, physically challenged lesbians, poor and working-class lesbians, and lesbians of varying cultural backgrounds." I am not making any of this up. Almost all small publications will suggest that submittors (what a *great word*, from an editorial perspective!) purchase a sample copy or two before submitting anything, in order to learn the magazine's character. This grosses anywhere from $2 to $8 for the litmag, but is expensive and usually unhelpful for the

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Jane Greer has edited and published Plains Poetry Journal *for seven years. Her Stronghold Press has published five poetry chapbooks, but is no longer in the book business.*

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writer. It doesn't really help the editor a lot, either: the same amount of garbage and number of masterpieces will come in the mail no matter *how* much submittors study the guidelines.

Worse than any of these curses on submittors is The Big Chill: that two-to-36-month void which occurs between the date on which you send a submission to almost any independent publisher or litmag with a circulation of 100 to 10,000, and the date on which the preprinted rejection slip is received. This often happens after several inquiries, all containing the ubiquitous self-addressed, stamped envelope known to insiders as the "SASE." The curious thing about this waiting game is that many independent publishers are also writers who complain themselves about the anguish of The Big Chill. What's wrong with this picture?

Submittors put in full days at jobs to come home, write, and submit poetry at night. They squeeze it in among a million common domestic and civic duties to spouse, children, home, and community. Many submittors teach English and creative writing at institutions of higher learning (or are retired academics, or grad students hoping for tenure). Do they teach because they're frustrated writers, or because they can't make a living writing—or do they write because teaching inspires them? Never mind; the same question could be asked of the millions of people with nonacademic jobs who are published by independent presses.

A litmag *editor's* problems are different but, of course, related. Each day she faces a post office box full of sad, fifth-rate meanderings about broken hearts or a darling puppy (and that's the *better* class of failures; it's impossible to tell *what* some of the leavings are about). Then there are the nasty notes from would-be poets who were previously turned down, as gently as possible, as well as the poignant near-misses from promising writers whom the editor will try to mollify and coax into submitting again. On a good day, there'll be one or two subscriptions, which will lull the editor into thinking that the cost of printing the next issue is no longer a problem. And once in a while—just often enough—there will be a sheaf of brilliant poems from an old regular, or a pro who's only recently discovered that litmag, or—best of all, in many editors' opinions—a previously unpublished dentist or airline stewardess. Editors, very few of whom teach English at universities (the one obvious exception being university press editors), work hard at jobs all day and then spend their evenings and weekends going through the mail, making publishing decisions, toting up debits and credits one more time, and emptying their checking account to pay the printer. Oh, yes, and writing, typing up, Xeroxing, and sending out *their* work to *other* litmags. All of which happens *after* a little end-of-workday conversation with one's spouse, after the dishes and the kids' homework are done and the kids are in bed, the household bills paid, the plumber called, the lawn mowed.

From a bottom-line point of view, there's nothing in this enterprise for either party: neither riches nor glory in *sending* literary work to independent publishers, nor in *publishing* a litmag or chapbook series. Why, then, do so many people persevere, and why do their numbers proliferate?

There are several motives for those who send their work to independent publishers. These motives also determine whether they *subscribe*. First of all, there are the "Helen Hooven Santmyer Wanna-bes." These people have written one poem or story in their life, about Iwo Jima or the birth of their first grandchild, say, and are convinced it's Pulitzer material. Also in this category are people who have vague but uplifted feelings about "nature" and write about daffodils and mountains and warm spring rain on their face, and prison inmates whose no-doubt-therapeutic work invariably begins, "Who am I????!!" These people are serious about many things, but writing a good poem or story is not one of them. They send their work to independent publishers because someone else—usually a family member or parole officer—suggests that they should. Teenagers fall into this category, too, but they're merely *young* and may very well grow up into fine writers. None of these people buy litmags or books from independent presses.

Secondly, there are the star pupils from university writing workshops and what *Poultry* (an outrageous parody tabloid edited by Jack Flavin, Brendan Galvin, and George Garrett) calls "Meatloaf Mountain"—professional amateurs who crank out one or two pieces a day, every day, and send them off just as quickly. These people are scattershot experts. They aim to be published *once* in every extant litmag. (It makes for a longer résumé—with the effective use of white space it's possible to fashion a whole page out of 20 published poems, if they were all published in different places—and many of these people are college professors who don't want to perish.) Once an editor publishes these writers, they're history there, that litmag a *fait accompli*, even if the editor has praised them and asked for more of their work. Surprisingly, what they write is often very good, but they don't take time to build a readership anywhere. Their commerce with the litmags that publish them is similar to that of a man with a prostitute: both parties benefit a little, but not as much as they would if they had a *relationship*. And these people don't buy litmags.

The third category of submittors to independent presses is larger than the other two, and balances them. These people write, and send what they write out into the cruel world, simply because they *love* to write. Whether or not they graduated from or even attended college, they are always *studying* their craft. Their work ranges from mediocre to exquisite; they may be shy or masterfully self-confident; but they *all* want to become *better*. They ask for comments on their work. This is the group most bothered by The Big Chill, because they are too painstaking to be prolific, don't have a lot of poems or stories circulating at any given time, and care more about the work itself than the warm fuzzy that produced it or the way it will look on a résumé. These people assume—often mistakenly—that the editor knows more than they do. They will revise strenuously based on an editor's late-night off-hand remarks. They will ask an editor they like who *his* favorite writers are, and then study the work of those writers, not necessarily to increase their chances of getting published, but just to enlarge the scope of their literary knowledge. Needless to say, *these* are the people who *buy* litmags. They give gift subscriptions to their brother-in-law and the library at their

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alma mater. They show the litmag to friends and try to get *them* to subscribe. Out of sheer appreciation and a starving need for literary intercourse, they send Christmas cards and newspaper clippings to editors who have never written them more than a brief critical note.

Otherwise-normal human beings turn independent-press editor or publisher for one very uncomplicated reason: *because it sounds like fun*. Oh, after they're in the business for a while they may begin to enjoy correspondence with certain writers or other editors or publishers they wouldn't have met otherwise; and they may discover, through their litmag, others who will appreciate their *own* work—but these are peripheral benefits. There's no money in editing a litmag, not even compensation for one's time; there's no glory, and a lot of kicks in the backside; it's never improved a résumé or impressed *anyone*; and there are a dozen varieties of frustration. These days, when the only seemingly solid proof of success is to have reached people in quantities upwards of seven figures, independent publishers struggle for years to raise their circulation from 200 to 500, from 500 to 1,000—and that's *people*, not thousands. The only explanation that makes sense is that those who stick with a litmag or independent press through the lean years (which may continue indefinitely) do so simply because in spite of it all, it's *fun*. To make something beautiful and enduring in your own image, from dust and a little spit and the work of others: why, it's almost more fun than writing!

Still, the writing is what matters, when you get down to it. Editors understand that as clearly as submittors and readers do. People associated with independent publishing in any way—whether they edit, write for, or buy literary magazines and books—believe that literature *is* important in the cosmic scheme of things. Yes, it's true (as George Steiner and others have noted) that many Nazis did their ghastly work in the concentration camps and then went blithely home to read Goethe each evening, but literature *can* inform us of our moral position in the universe, if we're receptive to it. It gives us a glimpse inside the writer's mind, and thus inside our own, because literature is essentially about the human dilemma: the problem of being half animal, half angel. And certainly not least of all, literature can *delight*.

It can do none of this, though, if no one can read it. And that's where independent publishers come in. *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic* and *McCall's* couldn't print all the good stories and poems being written if they *wanted* to (which it often seems they don't).

One example of a relatively successful independent press is The Spirit That Moves Us, founded in Iowa City in 1974 by Morty Sklar, who had "just wanted to get out of New York." Sklar is among a handful of independent publishers who try to earn a livelihood publishing literature. Unmarried and childless, he's squeaking by.

The Spirit That Moves Us was, in 1983, the first press to publish a collection, in English, by Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert, who would the next year win the Nobel Prize for literature. Sklar is proud of this, but not noticeably any prouder than he is of 14 years of poets who *haven't* found notoriety. His press is relatively mature and has a good reputation, none of which will ever bring in Morty Sklar a Mercedes or a condo in Palm Springs. "I'm just hooked," he explains, citing (inevitably) friendships with other poets and editors, and the euphoria of contributing to the literary world. "And if I can't sleep at night, there's always some work I can do."

From 1971-1985 Linda Hasselstrom ran Lame Johnny Press, which produced books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, and from 1971-1976 published *Sunday Clothes: A Magazine of the Fine Arts*. She did all of this from her ranch near tiny Hermosa, South Dakota.

"The reward of Lame Johnny Press was helping good regional writers see their work in print, often for the first time. Those rewards are still coming in: Dan O'Brien, an author whose first published short story appeared in *Sunday Clothes*, saw his first novel, *The Spirit of the Hills*, reviewed in *The New York Times* last year, and it's been optioned by Steven Spielberg. Other writers have gone on to other books. It is a source of immense pride to me that many of them might have given up, or might have waited years and years more to be published without my help.

"*Sunday Clothes* . . . endured being entirely broke three times, as I experimented with various ways of supporting it. I was fleeced by a flood and then [by my first] husband. The third time I went broke it was because I briefly took a job out of state to supplement my income and to add to my experience and resume. While I was gone my brand new advertising salesman sold $5,000 worth of advertising, spent the money, and disappeared. The magazine limped along until I'd printed the ads that had been contracted for in my name."

Lame Johnny kept publishing books for another decade. Why did Hasselstrom give up her press after 14 years in which she published 23 books, several of them small classics now, and developed a national reputation? "I had gradually whittled jobs out of my life to make room for the expanding work of the press; I had given up valuable time with my husband (and now that he is dead that is painful for me), until there were only three things left in my working life: the ranch that keeps me in enough money to live, the press, and my writing. The press was all I could give up."

Why, then, did she *do* it for so long? "Almost every other publisher of an independent press in the nation could probably narrate this story by heart, though the details may differ a little. I suppose not many of us brand a bull and paste up a book on the same day. But the principle is the same: we all give our time, our energy, our money earned at various jobs, to bring out writing we think is important to the world.

"We keep doing it partly because many of us are writers, and we hope that somewhere in the world another independent publisher will love *our* books. But even if we aren't writing, we are involved in the struggle to provide fine literature. Most independent publishers can probably recite the names: Crane, Pope, Byron, Shelley, the Brownings, Tennyson, Poe, Edward Arlington Robinson, Willa Cather, Thomas Hardy, Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Kipling, Robert Burns, Washington Irving, Thomas Paine, William Blake. Without independent publishers, many of them might never have been published."

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Beyond Moral Equivalency

by William A. Donohue

"The triumph of demagogies is short-lived. But the ruins are eternal."

—Charles Péguy

Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute for Policy Studies
by S. Steven Powell
Ottawa, IL: Green Hill Publishers

◆

Jeane Kirkpatrick has given us two useful ways to think about that segment of the American intelligentsia that continuously finds fault with virtually everything this country does: they are the "blame America first" crowd and the believers in "moral equivalency." After reading S. Steven Powell's penetrating study, *Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute for Policy Studies,* it seems clear that a new vocabulary is needed. If some of the nation's critics "blame America first," it is because many of them "hate America first," i.e., they find the political, economic, social, and cultural institutions of America more offensive than those existing anywhere on the globe. It is not "moral equivalency" they seek to promote, but "moral malfeasance"—they hope to convince the world of the immorality and venality of everything American. There is no better example of the "hate America first" crowd than the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). Founded in 1963 by Richard Barnet and Marcus Raskin, two disenchanted members of the foreign policy establishment in the Kennedy administration, IPS has spent the past quarter century trying to undermine the foundations of American society and destroy its defensive capabilities. Given seed money by the Stern Family Fund, IPS has long depended on the Samuel Rubin Foundation for the lion's share of its revenue, and has received generous contributions as well from the likes of the Playboy, Ford, and MacArthur Foundations.

The late Samuel Rubin was a member of the Communist Party and a wealthy businessman, a capitalist who took the millions he made from Faberge cosmetics to discredit the very system that made him stinking rich. His daughter, Cora, as well as her husband, Peter Weiss, has been faithful to the family tradition, working through IPS to sabotage American security interests and disable the economy that supports their subversion. It is no exaggeration to say that IPS is the most respectable mainstream left-wing institution in American history. It even enjoys tax-exempt status.

The strong language used to characterize IPS is deliberate: it is designed to provoke readers to understand that we are not simply dealing with yet another case of the unintended evil caused by well-meaning but deluded intellectuals. We are dealing with planned, organized, intended effects engineered by people who are neither well-meaning nor intellectuals. IPS personnel are strategists, activists who are sometimes engaged in the war of ideas, sometimes in breaking the law, and sometimes in giving succor to our adversaries. It is a mistake to think that

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they are reformers: to reform is to improve, and there is almost nothing in American society that IPS wishes to improve upon. They prefer to ruin, not rectify.

The key players in IPS history testify to its radical status. Richard Barnet, for example, was invited by Hanoi during the height of the Vietnam War to give credence to the Communist cause. He openly said he was on *their* side, telling North Vietnamese officials that they were fighting "against the same aggressors that we will continue to fight in our country." Consistent with such thinking, Barnet has said that the US is no model for underdeveloped countries and that the revolutions in Russia and China have brought economic progress, while Cuban Communism has yielded educational improvements. And he has justified the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by arguing that the Kremlin sensed "its own security slipping away." (Were the mountain men, armed with World War I Lee-Enfields, about to take Moscow on foot?)

Marcus Raskin is even more blunt. He, too, collaborated with the enemy in Vietnam, and has written that American-style democracy "menaces the freedom and well-being of its citizenry" and "poses a danger to world civilization." He has referred to the Pentagon as a "bloated genocide-preparing military system" and has, not surprisingly, called for the elimination of the FBI, Secret Service, CIA, and Armed Forces. Raskin believes that neither a democracy nor a republic exists in America and has worked relentlessly to weaken US intelligence activities. A former member of the editorial board of *Ramparts*, Raskin today says of IPS activists, "We are all Marxists."

Other senior IPS players include Chester Hartman, the advocate for the homeless who sponsors rent-control legislation (thereby contributing to the problem he claims to worry about), and author of a lavish public housing program, the express intent of which is to "further undermine the existing economic system." Robert Borosage is the IPS director, an activist who holds that (a) the Soviet Union is more interested in arms control than the US and (b) Moscow is the source of "interesting social experiments" in "Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Cuba and Nicaragua." Most revealing of all is Saul Landau, former member of the Communist Party's youth organization, participant in the World Communist Youth Festival in Havana, initial member of the KGB-sponsored Venceremos Brigade, personal friend of Fidel Castro, and producer of propaganda movies on Cuba and Nicaragua.

It would be one thing if only a few hacks were involved in IPS. But such is not the case. Perhaps the most valuable contribution that Powell has made in this well-researched and well-documented book is the insight he provides into the extensive network of IPS activities and programs. IPS is, unquestionably, the mecca for left-wing causes in the United States. More than that, it is the mother of left-wing spin-off organizations and projects, responsible for the genesis of organizations like the Center for National Security Studies and publications like *Mother Jones*. It has founded radio syndicates, news wire services, journals and periodicals, foundations, "peace institutes," anticorporate associations, socialist leagues, and international organizations.

In the 1960's, IPS was busy sponsoring the W.E.B. DuBois School of Marxist Studies, a Communist Party front group. It was also the intellectual training camp for scores of self-styled revolutionaries, including Bill Ayers, one of the chief bomb and demolition engineers for the Weathermen. When the Weathermen were locked up for rioting in Chicago in 1968, Arthur Waskow of IPS wired money for bail. Waskow even tried to convince the Justice Department that it should indict the Illinois State Attorney General for prosecuting the urban terrorists.

Meanwhile, senior IPS activist Cora Weiss was planning and leading anti-war demonstrations, inciting her followers to "storm the doors of the White House" next time around. At the end of the decade, IPS became the depository for the Pentagon Papers, having been given the stolen classified documents by Daniel Ellsberg. IPS kept the documents for a year and a half before Ellsberg gave the papers to *The New York Times* for publication. Interestingly, it was Paul Warnke — later to become the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency director — who gave Ellsberg access to the Pentagon Papers in the first place. Today Warnke is a trustee of IPS.

In the 1970's, IPS continued to work against US national security interests, helping to launch *CounterSpy* magazine, which ex-CIA agent Philip Agee used to publish the names of CIA operatives. *CounterSpy* was directly responsible for the death of Robert Welch, the CIA bureau chief in Athens, Greece, but that didn't stop IPS fellow Paul Jacobs from commenting that "It should come as no real surprise, nor cause for grief, when a CIA agent gets killed in the line of 'duty.'" In the late 1970's, atheist Cora Weiss and minister William Sloane Coffin cofounded the Riverside Church Disarmament Program. Both of them were among the welcoming party that hosted Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega in 1985. Predictably, IPS has raised money for the Sandinistas.

What keeps IPS afloat, more than anything else, is the credibility it carries with important segments of the media and the Congress. In a piece that *The New York Times* did in the fall of 1987 on Jesse Jackson, it quoted IPS fellow Roger Wilkins, referring to him as a member of the *liberal* Institute for Policy Studies. When Ted Koppel introduced IPS activist Chester Hartman on *Nightline*, December 26, 1987, he made no mention of the status of IPS and simply told viewers that Hartman works for the Institute. Worse still is *The Washington Post*, an organ whose writers have been known to teach at IPS. The major media not only treat IPS with respect, they often pick up stories published in IPS publications. Still another way IPS influences the media is by positioning its members, like Richard Barnet, on the editorial board of magazines like *Sojourners*.

Congress grants legitimacy to IPS by letting its spokesmen testify before

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committees of the House and Senate. Moreover, some congressmen and senators speak at IPS functions, some permit the organization to schedule trips for them to places like Nicaragua, others make space available in their chambers for conferences, and many more solicit budget studies from the Institute. And to top it off, presidential candidate Jesse Jackson regularly avails himself of IPS advisors.

It is testimony to the moral and intellectual dissolution of liberalism that a body like IPS is tolerated as a mainstream organization. IPS is accepted because liberalism has left itself completely open to penetration from the left, without any standards by which to discriminate between reformers and revolutionaries. That is why Robert Borosage thinks he can seize the moment and profess to make IPS an "invisible presence" in the Democratic Party. But as Steven Powell maintains, the only thing that is invisible about IPS is its real intent: "Operating in the open may well provide the best cover for pursuing subversive activities in a free society. IPS thrives. And few suspect it of seditious or disloyal behavior." Now that Powell has successfully unmasked IPS for what it is, there is no room left for claiming ignorance.

IPS has more in common with the KGB than with any conventional liberal organization. Moreover, as Powell nicely documents, KGB agents not only speak glowingly of IPS, they come and go from IPS seminars on a regular basis, fraternizing with their American comrades. The only real difference between IPS and the KGB is that IPS activists are not on Moscow's payroll and do not spend their time exclusively serving the interests of the Soviet Union—in virtually every other respect they are alike. Both hold the US in contempt, both seek to smash capitalism and introduce socialism (IPS associate fellow Derek Shearer admits to sugarcoating the organization's preference for socialism by calling it "economic democracy"), and both support wars of national liberation—wars which are neither national in scope nor liberating in effect.

It's ironic: in the Soviet Union, people who agitate for freedom and democracy are charged by official psychiatrists with "paranoid delusions of reforming society," and are then shipped off to the local nuthouse. In this country, people who agitate for the destruction of freedom and democracy are courted by the nation's cultural elite, awarded tax-exempt status for organizing, and given the opportunity to become advisors to the President of the United States. And yet with all this, liberals learn nothing.

In his excellent introduction to this revealing book, David Horowitz says it's about time we end the taboos that still inhibit honest discussion on the subject of the left in America. Agreed. Let us begin by discriminating between those who are unable to think clearly about the difference between the US invasion of Grenada and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and those whose profession is to make sure that the liberal disability remains uncorrected. Then we'll be prepared to understand the difference between well-meaning liberals and the gang at the Institute for Policy Studies. ◇

THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

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Richard John Neuhaus, General Editor

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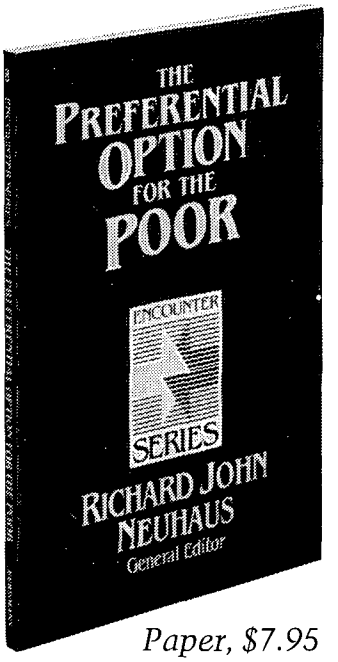

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Transylvanian Tales

by Peter Benenson

"Tyrants are always assassinated late; that is their great excuse."
—Cioran

Red Horizons
by Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa
Chicago: Regnery Gateway

◆

It is no surprise that there are a number of mysteries about this book. The author was the deputy director of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service; for reasons that he does not care to explain, he defected to the USA in July 1978. Was he a deep-cover American agent? Just before he defected, he says, he took up from under the parquet of his apartment an envelope containing his membership card for the Association of Young Friends of the USA, issued in 1945, and destroyed it. How strange! Was not that just the moment when the card might have come in handy? And fancy keeping it all those years—even under the parquet—when, as he makes it clear, every senior official was spying on his peers on the direct orders of President Nicolae Ceausescu. And why wait ten years before publishing all this flesh-chilling information in a book, when the ghastly practices of the Romanian Intelligence Service were revealed by one of his colleagues in 1984? (*Je refuse de tuer, un agent secret roumain révéle les dessous de l'affaire* by Matui Haidaen.)

The author reveals that as a child he was forced each day by his father (who worked for a General Motors affiliate in Bucharest) to learn by heart a whole page of that city's telephone directory. This training gave him a photographic memory that made him most useful to Ceausescu, and no doubt accounted for the closeness of their relationship. He uses this memory to recount word-by-word conversations that happened ten and 20 years ago. If there are contradictions in the text they may, perhaps, be ascribed to the English-language amanuensis who probably assisted him. It is greatly to be regretted that neither Pacepa nor this assistant understood the principles on which such a book of memoirs should be compiled; it is neither chronological nor organized around subject matter, just a stream of recollections, sadly confusing despite some fascinating material.

The writer himself compares Ceausescu to Marcos of the Philippines; he says that both are of the same small build and have similar facial characteristics, except that Marcos's skin is slightly darker. The two dictators have been good friends, as have their wives, who are alike in many ways, although Elena Ceausescu can in no way rival the good looks of Imelda Marcos. Elena Ceausescu, however, exceeded Imelda's dress collection by having a new garment for every day of the year.

Most offensive of all, Elena Ceausescu poses as an intellectual, a scientist, a chemist, having her books written by the Intelligence Service, and demanding honorary doctorates in whichever country her long-suffering husband visits. (The Philippines gave her a degree only after the intervention of the omnipresent General Ver.)

Pacepa also claims that Ceausescu had salted away, as of ten years ago, no less than $400 million—some in the safes of the Romanian Intelligence Service, some in Swiss banks "against a rainy day." Ceausescu only came to power in 1965; if he had plundered this sum in 13 years, how much is his "nest egg" worth now?

Peter Benenson is the founder of Amnesty International.

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Pacepa's book understandably concentrates on aspects of Romanian deviltry which are of interest to American readers. One of these is Ceausescu's flirtation with Qaddafi, when the Libyan was overflowing with oil revenues. The crafty Romanian president managed to wheedle promises of Libyan money to finance no less than three oil refineries along the Black Sea shoreline. Ceausescu also extracted Libyan funds to construct a whole series of tanks based on the West German "Leopard" (the designs of which had been "lifted" by Pacepa's Intelligence Service). But little seems to have come of all this cooperation; the money was wasted, as has happened with so many of Ceausescu's schemes. He saw Romania as a vast supplier of stolen Western-designed armaments. He also saw himself as the winner of the Nobel Prize for having mediated between Arafat and Golda Meir, but all he achieved was preventing Golda's assassination while she was in Bucharest.

Ceausescu paid no less than four state visits to the USA—in 1970, 1973, 1975, and 1978. Posing as an independent within the Warsaw bloc, he secured the "most-favored nation" status for Romanian trade while at the same time having his engineers acquire designs from the US, notably in electronics, which were then passed on to the USSR. Napoleonic in his vision of his role on the world stage, he saw himself not only as intermediary between Zionists and Arabs but even between the two superpowers. However, his appalling human rights record eventually destroyed his image in the US, largely thanks to the presence of 300,000 Romanians who have immigrated here, many to escape his tyranny. When they gathered outside the Waldorf Astoria on his last visit shouting "Ceausescu—Idi Aminu," pelting his car with eggs and tomatoes, he escaped to his suite by the back entrance and vomited. Like most bully-dictators, Ceausescu is no hero; while visiting Dallas he could not sleep all night for the fear of being assassinated like John Kennedy. Revelations about his corruption, brutality, and incompetence by Romanian dissidents on Radio Free Europe have thrown him into such rage that he has ordered the immediate murder of the broadcasters. These killings, Pacepa says, are not carried out by Romanians, but by Mafia thugs recruited all over Europe to take part in Romania's cocaine trade.

Perhaps it is the drug-running that will be Ceausescu's final undoing—this windfall from the Near East, with which he has maintained such close contact. Ceausescu has five palaces and a special residence in each of the country's 39 provinces; he has a fleet of private planes that exceeds that at the disposal of Queen Elizabeth and her family; he has special trains, and even four special ambulances standing by at all times, in case he may need them. He has placed his brothers in the top positions in the country; his younger son Nicu, a drunken lout by all accounts, has unlimited prerogatives, and his wife, Elena, to believe Pacepa, runs the internal affairs of the country while he tries to strut the world stage as an unwanted mediator. Corruption, personal aggrandizement, tyranny: these are features of almost all despotisms. Ugly, vicious, and cruel as they are, it has become accepted that these vices are not sufficient grounds for external interference. But drug-dealing—passing cocaine from the Near East in Romanian T.I.R. trucks to Western Europe—that is another matter. If this vice is enough to cause the civilized world to take action against General Noriega of Panama, then Ceausescu's days may be numbered. We should all be grateful to Pacepa for revealing this disgraceful racket.

REVISIONS

ON ESSAI

For Montaigne they were little "attempts," and for us it is much the same. *On essai*, or "we're trying"—such is the state of the essay today, although the form has fallen out of favor, as Annie Dillard points out in her introduction to *The Best Essays of 1988* (Ticknor & Fields, 328 pp., paper, $8.95).

In or out of favor, the essay hasn't died, not while there are books to review and magazine-length news reports to write, not while *The New York Review of Books* smells blood, and the little magazines keep getting funding. But essays lack that certain *je ne sais quoi*, the panache of fiction. Who ever heard of this year's new hot young essayist? (In general it is not a form for younger writers, though Dillard was herself an exception.) Nobody believes anymore that truth is stranger than fiction, or even that truth is more truthful. Yet, as Dillard points out in her introduction: "Veracity isn't much of a drawback to the writer; there's a lot of truth out there to work with." Besides, she writes, "[t]he essay can do everything a poem can do, and everything a short story can do—everything but fake it."

Annie Dillard is fighting to save the farm, and in picking her as this year's guest editor, the folks at Ticknor & Fields garnered themselves one of the best essayists around. At 27 she published her first book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, a volume of beautifully interwoven essays that not only won a Pulitzer but deserved it, and the collections of essays that followed—*Holy the Firm*, *Tickets for a Prayer Wheel*, and *Encounters with Chinese Writers*—show her to be nonpareil. In general I shy away from formula books, but there's nothing like getting a good writer to choose for you to enliven a collection of "the best of."

Included here are George Garrett, in a nice memoir, "My Two One-Eyed Coaches." ". . . Well, now, you are surely thinking," he writes. "All of that must have been wonderful training for a life in the American literary world: hard knocks, massive confusion, fake punts, fake passes, and fake field goals, ceaseless trickery and treachery; and all of it depending on luck, on pure dumb luck. . . . And, once in a while, on coaching."

There is another nice autobiographical piece by William Kittredge, "Home," originally published by Graywolf. There is a more reportage-ish essay by the excellent Richard Selzer, whose piece on AIDS in Haiti, "A Mask on the Face of Death," was done for *Life*. There is even a so-so piece by Canadian Anne Carson, but then America has been annexing so-so Canadian literature for years now.

What "the best of" books are good for is giving the Gentle Reader a window on the year in letters. Too often such windows look out upon a brick wall. It's always nice to be reminded that there are writers around—some of them even making a living writing—who provide us with a view. (KD)

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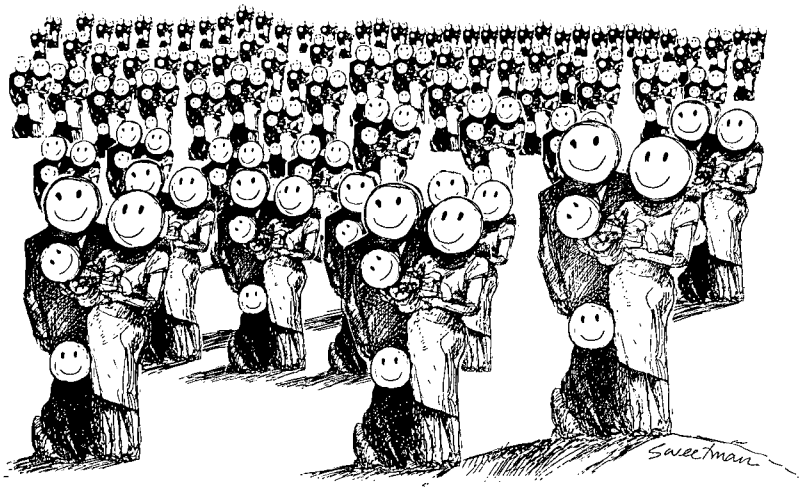
Ahistorical Admonitions

by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

"One age cannot be completely understood if all others are not understood. The song of history can only be sung as a whole."
—Ortega y Gasset



The Politics of Human Nature
by Thomas Fleming
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; 276 pp.,
$29.95

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In *The Politics of Human Nature*, Thomas Fleming has boldly undertaken to delineate a system of natural politics. A classicist by training, Fleming believes that "the collapse of Roman authority in the West created a crisis from which political thinking has never quite recovered." Since that collapse, the vision of the lost unity of Rome's dominion has haunted political thinking, much as the vision of a lost Eden has haunted Christianity. In our own time, the destructive forces of modern technology have transformed that unrealizable, universalist dream into a nightmare that threatens our very survival. Yet the dream persists, according to Fleming, largely because of the natural—and not inherently evil—human propensity to seek simple solutions to complex questions. Evoking Aristotle, his main intellectual hero, Fleming reminds us that we are by nature eager to know. The trouble arises when our eagerness to know—to create some comprehensible order out of the apparent disorder of life—leads us into abstractions that ride roughshod over the reality of our nature and relations.

Beginning with Thomas Hobbes (one of Fleming's leading villains), political theorists have increasingly grounded the dream of unity in an apparently contradictory commitment to the primacy of the individual, whom they have taken to constitute the basic unit of society, and have viewed as the fundamental unit or embodiment of rights. Fleming perceptively allows that the emphasis on individuality has not been entirely a bad thing, if only because it has fostered that insistence upon the moral responsibility of the individual upon which modern civilization depends. But, on the whole, he views the grounding of political and social philosophy on individual rights as a disaster. Systematic (bourgeois, even if he does not use the term) individualism reduces human beings to abstractions and accounts for much of the woeful disarray of our own times.

For Fleming, our overriding problems concern the price of the progress we enjoy: high rates of family dissolution, ethical confusion and disintegration, sensationalist and homogenized mass culture, "and perhaps worst of all an apparent inability to agree on social priorities." He admires the Athenians for their sense of unity and family continuity—blessings that no modern society has known. This sense of unity, emanating as it did from the strength of family and community, permitted them to accept the state as a natural articulation of their basic social relations, not as an alien power. We moderns, in contrast, have invariably perceived the relations between the individual and the state as antagonistic. For us, in the manner of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, the fundamental problem of political philosophy has been the balance between freedom and order: what rights must the individual relinquish for the good of the collectivity?

Fleming himself is too much a modern for that dilemma not to haunt his work, but he proposes to resolve it by denying the legitimacy of its premises. For him, the struggle between the claims of freedom and those of order derives not from nature but from our

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misguided history as a species. They are not—as Freud, for example, assumed—the very essence of the human condition, but rather the results of our deviation from the laws of nature. The quest to understand both human nature and human beings' denial of it leads Fleming from political theory to sociobiology, from the record of how we have imagined ourselves and our communities to the evidence of what we really are. Admitting that there are few universals in the record of human societies, he nonetheless insists that we have paid too little attention to those there are. The modern view, that human societies obey the laws of cultural rather than biological evolution, has blinded us to our inescapable biological roots. Rather than constantly struggling to escape nature, we should harken to its fundamental law, which must be sought not in "a set of ethical precepts derived from reason or revelation," but in "the actual behavior and conditions of human life." The records of human societies do, in fact, contain the data of natural law in those customs and institutions that appear universal, notably male dominance and the incest taboo.

Fleming continually insists that the record of actual human behavior far outweighs any abstract models of the state of nature and, on this basis, categorically rejects the myth so dear to bourgeois political theorists, that man was born free. Evoking Joseph de Maistre with approval he maintains that " 'man has never been free.'" If man has any "natural rights," they assuredly do not derive from some original state of independence. "Our rights come not from nature but from our nature, human nature, and that natural law is the behavioral code of the human species." All evidence suggests that the human species has never been composed of solitary beings, but of families that are frequently part of larger collectives and that are invariably dominated by men. In effect, male-dominated households constitute the building blocks of any social system, and relations among men constitute the principles of social relations. Fleming finds ample evidence that the relations among men are naturally characterized by both competition and cooperation. Almost from the beginning of human societies, he argues, "rivalry and competition for power and authority play an important role in establishing and maintaining social order." Yet cooperation is no less important: exchange of all forms—not merely the economic exchange of profit and loss—also binds humans together, frequently for altruistic reasons.

These and related arguments build to Fleming's central assertion: "Society is natural"; "our social nature" is not a matter of choice, "it is a given." The essence of that given lies in men's obligation to take care of women and children, for that obligation derives from the special relations of marriage and the family that lie at the root of all social order. "Without these primary, natural obligations, no other form of rights or duties makes any sense." In Fleming's thought, the family persists—or should persist—throughout history as the fundamental social unit. Families cohere in communities, communities in towns, towns in states, and so forth. But under no circumstances should the coherence be permitted to undermine the internal relations of the aggregate units. Following Tönnies, Fleming emphasizes the decisive difference between community and society, and insists that our social and political health require the protection of *communitas* in all its forms. On this basis, natural male aggression can safely and appropriately be channeled into the ritualized political and military contests characteristic of society.

Governance, in Fleming's view, is primarily a matter internal to families and communities. We live with a state that illegitimately intrudes itself into the affairs of families, intervening between parents and children, corroding the natural bonds of the family unit. In stark contrast to what we know, Fleming proposes a return to a genuine federalism of the kind advocated by Althusius at the dawn of the 16th century. In this model, society is organized into a pyramid of units, beginning with families, and proceeding through corporations, towns, and provinces, up to the state itself. The constituent members of the state are not individuals but these corporate political units. At every level, discrete units are represented by individuals who band together to form the next unit. Fathers, "the judges and foreign ministers of their families," represent their households to the next larger unit, and so forth. Government, Fleming approvingly quotes Althusius, "is held together by sovereignty (imperium) [and] subjection." But, and here lies the heart of the matter, the sovereignty and subjection should be exercised through a federated political structure along the lines of the great chain of being. Conflicts within families should be resolved within families, conflicts within neighborhoods within neighborhoods, and on up the scale. Never should the state be allowed to intervene in matters best settled by the direct participants. In our accelerating departure from the laws of our own nature, we are creating a monster that will level us all in the name of a chimerical and unnatural equality. By accepting the view of ourselves as atomized individuals, we are inviting the destruction of our very humanity.

Fleming's vision has many attractive and compelling features, especially his insistence that we recognize the biological or material foundations of our humanity and his plea for a new federalism that tailors government to the measure of human communities. But there are problems. His sneering references to Marxists and radical feminists, which disfigure and demean an otherwise serious discussion, deserve no more than passing reference. He clearly betrays his lack of interest in either Marxism or feminism by confusing the Eighteenth with the Nineteenth Amendment and by citing Marx's famous dictum that men make their own history without adding the qualification, "but not under conditions of their own choosing." Nor

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are occasional errors the main problem. Fleming, doubtless suffering the intellectual ostracism of the academy, had to work for long stretches without benefit of a research library or research assistance. These situational liabilities unavoidably leave their mark on his sweeping foray through political theory, sociobiology, psychology, and contemporary life, occasionally giving his book the voice of one who has been instructing and talking to himself. In this respect, his book resembles some of the great works of political thought that also bear the signs of their authors' continuing self-education, as well as the consuming desire "to grasp the scheme of things entire."

Like his aspiring forebears, Fleming also seeks imaginatively to reshape the sorry world we know closer to his heart's desire. In this quest, he brilliantly seeks the salient causes of our most pressing woes in the corrosive and disintegrating tendencies of a radical individualism that abstracts from the specificity of human nature. But, in so doing, he risks falling into his own version of the utopianism that he reproaches in so many others. In attempting to sidestep political philosophy's exercises in abstraction, Fleming turns directly to the evidence from sociobiology, thus effectively jumping over most of history between the ancient Athenians and our own time. To be sure, he locates the immediate origins of systematic individualism in the 17th century, but he does not associate it with any specific historical developments. Not for him the complications of the emergence of capitalism and the rise and triumph of the bourgeoisie. Presumably such questions detract from the elegant simplicity of the story he wishes to tell. Presumably also, from his perspective, they count for little, since the human species has maintained its basic attributes throughout the vicissitudes of historical events.

Fleming's strategy serves his purposes well, but will not pass muster as a serious consideration of the issues that most concern him. To cast the debate, as he does, as one between biological evolution and cultural evolution is to pass in silence over precisely what is most central to our humanity—our history. The contemporary ills that Fleming so convincingly deplores cannot be attributed to biology, nor can they be attributed simply to the malicious theories of irresponsible philosophers. Fleming's predecessors, like Fleming himself, developed their theories as commentaries upon their own societies. Modern individualism, which did accompany the rise and triumph of the bourgeoisie, did not begin with the fall of Rome. It began with the rise and expansion of capitalism which has, since its inception, been a self-revolutionizing system capable of penetrating the walls of even the best-governed households and the minds of even the best-reared children.

In Virginia, in the 19th century, George Fitzhugh took the measure of the problem. Recognizing the tendency of the capitalist market to level hierarchies, sever children from their parents, wives from their husbands, and servants from their masters, Fitzhugh unflinchingly proposed outright war on capitalism. Give no quarter, he admonished his fellow slaveholders, for if you fail to resist the least capitalist incursion upon the institutions you hold dear, you will live to see them crumble before you. The course we have pursued since Fitzhugh's day justifies his warning, if not his proposed solution. In our own time, only the Soviets have been able to opt out of the capitalist market that is engulfing the world, and even they are having to rethink their position. The rest of us, for better or worse, remain condemned to deal with it directly or to succumb to its suffocating embrace.

The problem, as Fleming would be the first to recognize, admits of no easy solution. If, as he so insightfully argues, modern individualism has bequeathed us, in addition to its innumerable miseries, the blessing of individual moral responsibility, so has capitalism, in addition to its miseries, afforded us the ability—should we choose to grasp it—to save the peoples of the world from starvation, to save women from death in childbirth and infants from premature death, to vanquish smallpox and syphilis, and more. Perhaps Fleming would prefer to forego these benefits in the interests of restoring the integrity of the family, but even he might blanch at a life without heating or air-conditioning, without braces and flouride and a polio vaccine. Whatever his preferences with respect to these and other matters, he cannot honestly duck the underlying problem. I should be the first to agree with him that our society has woefully failed to contain the worst effects of capitalism to the detriment of our families, our culture, our ethics; the first to agree that our intellectual elite has too eagerly swum with the current rather than erecting the necessary dams against it. But I cannot follow him in pretending that our political philosophers have written in a vacuum.

Political philosophy alone is not responsible for the large corporations that move employees from place to place, severing generations from each other, reducing communities to way stations in the frantic climb to the top. Political philosophy alone cannot be expected to withstand the proliferation of commodities, the need for two incomes to support most families, the explosion in numbers of divorces and single parents, the necessity for protracted and frequently technical education, the destruction of our environment, the wanton dissemination of pornography and drugs. Indeed, next to the power of the capitalist market, political philosophy looks less like a monster than a wimp. Ideas, as Richard Weaver insisted, do have consequences. And our own, as he also insisted, have moved too much in the direction of abstraction, too far from that rhetoric that would engage our history and our condition. But Fleming himself, for all the perspicacity and wisdom of his message, is in danger of abstracting from precisely that level of experience which most directly affects our prospects. To have valuable consequences, ideas must also have appropriate targets.

At the heart of Fleming's discussion lies the natural family, the incubator of humanity. The findings of sociobiology confirm his instinctive commitment to the significance of the differences between men and women, and fuel his attack on contemporary feminists who recklessly disregard nature's plan. For the world to function as it should women must embrace their natural roles as nurturing mothers, leaving to men the business of aggression and competition. But in our own time, the issue is not so much the biological differences between men and women as their appropriate social consequences. At his most insightful, Fleming fully recognizes that men's natural aggres-

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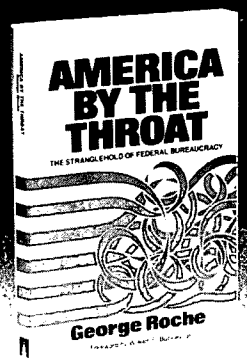
sion and competition has been molded and even displaced with the development of civilization. He is less willing to consider the ways in which civilization has molded women. To be sure, he draws upon the work of Carol Gilligan to argue the case for women's discrete moral sense. But he, like Gilligan, never considers that that moral sense derives from the experience of contemporary white, middle-class women, not from nature.

Feminism—Gilligan's as much as the versions Fleming deplores—is a symptom of our times, not an original cause of our ills. Feminism, whatever its intellectual failings and excesses, reflects women's attempt to come to terms with their own situation in a world in which no father or brother can force a man to support a woman and her children. And feminism, even (as in Gilligan's case) when it most forcefully insists upon the radical differences between men and women, reflects the individualism that Fleming so deplores. Capitalism has done more than undermine the integrity of families and push women into the labor force; it has radically reduced the social significance of the biological differences between women and men. Modern contraception permits women to limit their fertility; modern medicine permits them to live safely through and well beyond their childbearing years. Modern technology reduces the relevance of men's physical strength to the business of earning a living and running the world. Fleming's admirable attempt to link politics to nature passes too lightly over these changes, refusing to address their possible consequences.

Ironically, conservative thought in general and Fleming's work in particular open new ways to explore these consequences. Fleming's own vision of federalism designates the household as the fundamental social unit, as indeed it has been for most of Western history, since the time of Aristotle. That traditional household, as Fleming insists, embodied within itself the ideals of hierarchy and inequality that characterized Western thought as a whole. It also embodied a commitment to family and class that transcended the specific differences between women and men. Obviously sexual difference played an important role in delineating the expected roles of women and men, but it never ensured that women might not engage in any given activity, it never regarded a woman's possibilities as coterminous with her biology. Traditional thought viewed what we call representation as delegation: the ability of a member of the household—or community—to speak or act in the name of the whole. And women were always, in the right circumstances, able to serve as delegates of their households, just as they were able to participate in their basic heavy labor and internal governance. It has taken modern individualistic thought to reduce the concept of membership and its attendant concept of delegation to simple identity. In this perspective, the unilateral emphasis on the social significance of biological difference can be recognized as every bit as reductive as the abstractions of individualism.

In this probing and thoughtful book, Thomas Fleming has begun to address the principal challenge to our society and polity. The individual freedom in the name of which our republic was launched has unleashed unimagined consequences that threaten to transform our polity from a federation of households and communities into a great mass of undifferentiated individuals presided over by a sinister leviathan. The capitalist market that, even in the 18th century, linked households to each other and the Atlantic world, has penetrated their interstices, dissolving natural and social bonds. The world of atomized individualism that Fleming seeks to counteract strongly resembles Thomas Hobbes' view of the state of nature: the "warre of all against all." More the product of history than of misguided philosophical speculation, that world must be reformed on its own terrain—that of our specific historical moment. Men—and women—do make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. The conditions that constrain us assuredly include biology and its attendant laws of human nature. They also include, as Fleming in another context so forcefully argues, the real lives that we live in the far from perfect world that we have inherited. ©

AMERICA BY THE THROAT:
THE STRANGLEHOLD OF FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY
by George Roche



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Inspiration and Craft

by David R. Slavitt

Collected Poems 1930-1986
by Richard Eberhart
New York: Oxford University Press; $29.95

New and Collected Poems
by Richard Wilbur
New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $27.95

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"Take these two books," is an entirely arbitrary prompting by an editor who happened to have them around on a shelf. Willy-nilly, here they are together, and one looks at them, shuffling through the poems, some familiar and some not. And there is a moment when the rightness of the conjunction seems wonderful! A piece organizes itself: Eberhart is a poet of inspiration, taking odd chances, falling on his face more often than any practitioner of comparable distinction in our time; Wilbur is a careful, consummate, almost intimidating craftsman who never makes technical errors. Thus an idea forms itself, whether for a book review or essay, or for a poem, or anything else, I should think. And as honest as we can be about our recollections of what actually takes place in that mysterious instant, it seems pretty clearly to be some combination of revelation and drudgery, epiphany and skill, or whatever we choose to call these opposing dualities.

You don't get to choose what kind of writer you're going to be. It is a mercy that most writers tend to approve of the kind they are, but that isn't always absolutely the case. There can be some generosity of spirit (or even some envy) by which you can see a blessing in the other kind of gift.

Eberhart is a winner of the Bollingen and Pulitzer prizes and the National Book Award, a former consultant in poetry at the Library of Congress. He has all the heavyweight credentials. And he has a respectable number of fine poems, even some "great" poems, if that word means anything. What I mean by it is that he has written at least a few poems many of us read in high school, studied in a curriculum that included Homer and Chaucer and Shakespeare and Pope. When we look back now at the texts of those school set-pieces in a freshly printed volume — "The Groundhog," "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment," "If I Could Only Live at the Pitch That Is Near Madness," and one or two others — I find that those pieces were not overpraised, or at least they haven't dated any. They still seem solid and lively, and intricate and passionate. Whatever poems are supposed to do or be, whatever kinds of excellences poetry is supposed to embody, they do and are, and this does.

On the other hand, there are, in this not-very-well-produced 444-page volume (no index of titles or first lines, a lot of show-through in the paper, and binding that even Doubleday would have been ashamed of in the worst of its bad old days), poems that seem amateurish and deplorable. The elegant rhymes and off-rhymes of "Aerial Bombardment" must have been as much a gift of inspiration as Eberhart has always claimed, because the clunky and deplorable demonstrations of some of his other rhymed pieces prove there wasn't anything reliable working like skill or proficiency or even taste. (It's okay to write terrible things if you have the good sense to throw them away soon afterward — one wonders on the strength or weakness of some of these pieces how well Eberhart can read!)

Begin at the beginning, with a piece that is actually a fragment of a long autobiographical poem, the opening poem in this volume, "This Fevers Me," which starts well enough:

> This fevers me, this sun
> on green,
> On grass glowing, this young
> spring.
> The secret hallowing is come,
> Regenerate sudden incarnation,
> Mystery made visible
> in growth, yet subtly veiled
> in all,
> Ununderstandable in grass,
> In flowers, and in the
> human heart,
> This lyric mortal loveliness,
> The earth breathing, and
> the sun.
> The young lambs sport,
> none udderless.

I beg your pardon? "None udderless?" That it has a meaning — no lamb is without a mother with an udder — is almost secondary to its astonishing dopiness, the cracked-gong rhyme with "loveliness," the break in the tone. It would be churlish to advert to such lapses if they were rare, but they aren't. They're common, even usual. More than half of the poems in this book ought to have been suppressed on the grounds that they were loaded with sodden abstractions, marred by clanking and inept rhymes, deformed by a windy preachiness that lards over authentic and honest observations and juxtapositions. And yet, there are the other poems, not all of them great but many of a high order of accomplishment, that make it worth your while to hack through the linguistic underbrush, often with a machete, to get to the good stuff.

Amateurish, I have said, and that seems more and more to be the right word, for the gifted amateur relies on inspiration, is open to almost anything, improvises what his craft can't supply, and is therefore liable to make gestures that a more traditionally and reliably trained practitioner might never think of. Emily Dickinson was an amateur, which is one reason she is so impossibly difficult to imitate. Eberhart's amateurishness is evident even in his famous and "great" poems. How else can one account for the third line of "The Groundhog":

> In June amid the golden fields,
> I saw a groundhog lying dead.
> Dead lay he; my senses
> shook . . .

Who else would risk hoots of derisive laughter that any shrewder operator might have predicted with "Dead lay he," which, against all odds, does work somehow? And what other 20th-century poet of any competence or reputation would risk the windy elevation of the end of the poem? It ought

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not be possible at all, but he gets away with:

It has been three years, now.
There has been no sign of
the groundhog.
I stood there in the
whirling summer,
My hand capped a withered
heart,
And thought of China and
of Greece,
Of Alexander in his tent;
Of Montaigne in his tower,
Of Saint Theresa in her
wild lament.

Is it because I read this in the eleventh grade that it seems right? I don't think it's just that. I am not absolutely confident of "My hand capped a withered heart," now that I look at it hard, but I do trust the rest. It is specific and mysterious at the same time. And I am persuaded that, for a young man's poem, there is a rightness to this and an honesty to the admission that the spirit can, at the oddest times and occasions, soar that way. And if that can happen, it is the poet's duty to keep the faith somehow and try to find not just the equivalent but the absolutely indispensable language to represent such a soaring.

Richard Wilbur, also a heavyweight (Pulitzer, Bollingen, and NBA winner, and poet laureate of the United States until Howard Nemerov took over from him), also has a book out, a major collection that is rather more handsomely produced than Eberhart's (but which also lacks an index of titles and first lines). What is striking about Wilbur is how he almost never makes mistakes. There will be, at the very worst, a slight self-indulgence in the too-perfect, almost self-congratulatory low-frequency word that calls attention not only to itself but the talent and virtuosity of the writer. This, though, is a small price to pay and, in any event, is central to what I take Wilbur to be doing, for his poems are, among other things, confrontations of proficiency and sensibility with the welter and mess of experience. The typical Wilbur performance begins with something simple —an array of laundry strung across a Roman street, for instance—and imposes upon it, or persuades from it, something orderly and significant, transmogrifying some dumb datum into something as memorable and eloquent as "Love Calls Us to the Things of This World." There must be a dozen such pieces, astonishingly graceful demonstrations not only of mastery but also of sanity and rightness. It is perhaps when he is at his saddest that the saving grace of his work is most clear. He says, for instance, at the end of "Cottage Street," a poem about Sylvia Plath, that she is

condemned to live,
Shall study for a decade,
as she must,
To state at last her
brilliant negative
In poems free and helpless
and unjust.

Wilbur's poems are anything but helpless, and it is their justice and the justice of his language that has a psychological and moral as well as literary reliability. He can be playful or serious, cheerful or dour, but he is never nutty or sloppy or disproportionate. He can also reach for a word and, by his grasp, extend our limits. He has an elegy for Dudley Fitts—a man who was my teacher—that has in it what I've always thought of as a remarkable series of moves:

Yet in the mind as in
The shut closet
Where his coat hangs in black
procession,
There is a covert muster.

One is moved to turn to him,
The exceptional man,
Telling him all these things,
and waiting
For the deft, lucid answer.

At the sound of that
voice's deep
Specific silence,
The sun winks and fails in
the window.
Light perpetual keep him.

To begin with, "covert muster" is amazing, the paradigmatic Wilbur turn. The assemblage of coats in the darkness of the closet is impressive and formal. The odd ring to the conjunction of Latinate adjective and slightly archaic noun suggests the funereal decorum of the occasion. "Muster" also suggests "master," which is right because Fitts was both a prep-school master and a *maestro* of poets. And then to go from the darkness of the closet to "lucid," and from that to the light of the sun winking and failing in the window (it has been prepared for, earlier in the poem), and from that to the closing prayer, "Light perpetual keep him," is both intricate and effortless. The poem is about the realization of absence, the empty coats in the closet, the "sound of that voice's deep/ Specific silence," and the light winking and failing—and then coming back, at least as a presence to be invoked. I simply can't imagine anything better accomplished.

Auden says somewhere that poets are not reliable judges of the work of other poets, and that there is a risk that we may prefer a second-rate poet from whom we can learn to a first-rate poet from whom we can't. I think there is substantial truth in that warning, which prompts me to admit that I have consciously addressed myself to Wilbur's poetry to learn from it as well as I could and to take as much as I was able of what I believe to be the highest level of consistent craftsmanship in any poet now writing in English (or, putting it another way, in any poet since Auden himself). I have assumed what I suppose Wilbur must assume, that we are given lives and personalities and we make of them what we can. The whole idea of craft is that it prevents you from messing up your opportunities, from botching good ideas or betraying promising starts. I think there are poems in this new Wilbur volume that are less impressive than others—that's inevitable, surely. But there is no poem that is botched, or stupid, or embarrassing. And there are a very great number that are astonishing and admirable.

On the other hand, there are poems in Eberhart that are astonishing too, and that may be even more impressive because of the gaps and lapses in so much of the work. If it is true, as Eberhart claims, that these pieces are often "given," or, in his phrase, "emitted in a high state of consciousness and control [so that] one has not had to change a word or maybe only a word or two," it's not only difficult to criticize but it is also beside the point. For what he—and we—have been given, the only sane and intelligent thing to do is to give thanks. We can ignore what we don't like. That is what happens any-

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way. One of the few good things about the lit biz is that it's only the good stuff that matters; the rest is forgotten quickly enough.

The work of both these men, however dissimilar and even contradictory in origin and impulse, is likely to remain with us for a long time.

David R. Slavitt is a poet living in Philadelphia.

An American Burke

by Paul T. Hornak

Collected Letters of John Randolph of Roanoke to Dr. John Brockenbrough, 1812-1833
edited by Kenneth Shorey
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; $28.95

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John Randolph (1773-1833) survives in America's footnotes as a colorful contrarian, and the Gore Vidal school of historiography pants at his duel with Henry Clay and his taste for opium. A master rhetorician, he left a long list of choice barbs, nearly all concocted on the spur of the moment. James Kilpatrick characterized the errant Judge Alcee Hastings using Randolph's swipe at Edward Livingston: "He is a man of splendid abilities, but utterly corrupt. Like rotten mackerel by moonlight, he both shines and stinks." But to most the senator from southern Virginia who argued for slavery and against westward expansion is as dead as his causes. Of the two biographies remaining in circulation, one is by a sworn enemy, Henry Adams. The other, favorable treatment of his life is by Russell Kirk, series editor of Transaction's Library of Conservative Thought, of which this collection is the premier volume. Edited by former *National Review* critic Kenneth Shorey, the Randolph letters to John Brockenbrough, a physician and banker, should if nothing else further the quirky Southerner's temperamental reputation. Illness was a governing factor all his adult life. No one knows for sure what disease he contracted at age 19, but it ended his romance with a Richmond belle, turned him grotesquely lean, and bent his taste to crackers and malt liquor for days at a time. Brockenbrough's medical background no doubt explains why these letters read like a catalog of ailments. "I have followed your advice with sensible benefit," Randolph writes from the backwoods of Roanoke in 1827, "but nothing seems to relieve the anxiety, distress, and languor to which I am by turns subjected, or the pains, rheumatic or gouty, that are continually flying about me." Diarrhea, influenza, coughs, limps, depression: he was sick more than he was well. Yet he delivers the litany of his disease with the imaginative flair of an actor, as though craving applause as well as pity from his audience of one. Nor is sickbed art the only charm of these letters. They complain with equal vigor of miry roads, shabby inns, congressional wags, and strutting bumpkins, a Hogarth backdrop for the great traditionalist's paeans to the vanishing world of the genteel planter.

How much of the wail he loosed against the tide of change was an echo of debility? Although Randolph abundantly documents the ills of a body bilious and melancholic, his quick and capacious mind, sanguine always, shines in every letter. They show him to be a perfect early American example of what Kirk refers to as "the political and moral attitude called conservatism." The attitude, he writes, does not spring from theories, but from "custom, convention, continuity. . . . Being disdainful of ideology, the conservative cast of mind has no presumptuous crib, the fond creation of some Terrible Simplifier, to which the devo-

tee may repair whenever in doubt." Dragging himself to Congress through 30 years of declining health, Randolph consistently fought for limited government, the rule of law, and the ancient prerogatives of property. Even his abolitionist opponents acknowledged he was a good man. He defended slavery because there were "200 mouths looking up to me for food . . . it would be more difficult to abandon them to the cruel fate which our laws would consign them, than to suffer with them." The letters, of course, brief as they are, truncate Randolph's already Byzantine reasoning, but they suggest the depth of his thought and its sometimes surprising turns. To quote a few:

American Democracy
"We hug our lousy cloaks around us, take another chaw of tubbaker, float the room with nastiness, or ruin the grate and fire-irons, where they happen not to be rusty, and try conclusions upon constitutional points."

Charity
"There is not a human being that I would hurt if it were in my power; not even Bonaparte."

The West
"Surely that must be the Yahoo's paradise, where he can get dead drunk for the hundredth part of a dollar."

Patriotism
"A mighty precious thing when it costs nothing, but the mass of mankind think it a very foolish thing when it curtails their self-indulgence."

Old Age
"That 'pliability of man's spirit' which yields him up to illusions of the ideal world, is gone from me for ever."

As Kirk says, the impression we form is of a peculiar psychology, a "cast of mind" backward-looking, negative about human possibility but positive about human worth, clear-eyed, alert, fiercely independent. Future books in the series will introduce or reintroduce the writings of the moralist W.H. Mallock, the Victorian jurist James Fitzgerald Stephen, and others, to a reading public raised on Rooseveltian liberalism. It will be interesting to see whether such unfashionable names "take" in times that label William F. Buckley Jr. a fascist. The choice of Randolph to open—perhaps the word is ignite—the series is excellent strategy. Like Buckley, where he fails to persuade he always dazzles; he is compellingly memorable, and memory is, as someone has said, the first step to understanding.

Paul T. Hornak has written for The New York Times, National Review, *and* Reason.

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The Secular Imagination

by Gregory J. Sullivan

Lionel Trilling
by Stephen L. Tanner
Boston: Twayne Publishers

◆

Under the tyranny of ideology that is a grim fact of contemporary life in university English departments, it is tempting to reflect on the career of Lionel Trilling (1905-1975) with an uncritical wistfulness. It is to Stephen Tanner's credit that his astute and balanced introductory study resists such a temptation; for however much Trilling's criticism remains something of a beacon during the dark night of deconstruction, his work contains severe flaws.

Trilling's sensibility was shaped in large measure by the humanist tradition of Matthew Arnold, from whom he learned a scholarly disinterestedness and a prudent aloofness from the brawls of partisan politics. What is more, Trilling's preoccupations were determined by his Arnold-like humanism. "His themes," Tanner says, "are relatively few and remain surprisingly constant from beginning to end of his career: literature as a criticism of life; the problematic but vital relationship between self and society; the perils of oversimplifying human nature and experience; the dangers of overweening intellect and will; and the complexity and pain of living the moral life."

Trilling's concerns, then, were of the highest order; his treatment of them, moreover, was unfailingly serious and expressed in what Tanner aptly calls "a style of extreme tact and judiciousness." Nevertheless, the moral and intellectual context in which Trilling developed these themes is embodied in the revolutionary trinity of Rousseau, Marx, and, above all, Freud. This devotion is not at all surprising; like many of his contemporaries, Trilling was raised in a secular milieu—"It is difficult," Tanner observes, "to think of Trilling as Jewish at all"—an experience that left gaps in his literary and cultural perceptions. Tanner is to the point:

> The most significant omission in Trilling's work is his failure, despite his historical predisposition, to recognize the vital significance of the continuing secularization of culture and the gradual withdrawal of God that have characterized the West since the seventeenth century.

The truth is that Trilling was a comfortable denizen of the Secular City, and he dutifully paid his obeisances, at one time or another, to its gods. Freud, of course, was for Trilling the most illustrious figure in the pantheon; and it is to what Tanner calls a "selective and idealized Freud" that he turned time and again for moral and cultural authority. But *Civilization and Its Discontents*, to choose a text that Trilling revered, is hardly the definitive source of a coherent point of view.

The secular world view lacks any metaphysical explanation of man's aboriginal depravity. To be sure, Trilling was keenly aware of our fundamentally tragic nature. His humanism, however, contained a marked tendency toward a utopianism that is bereft of any acknowledgment of ineradicable human frailty. Trilling was thus stranded by his rejection of either heaven in the next world or heaven on earth. This inherent tension is particularly conspicuous in his political liberalism. For instance, in the preface to *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), he indicates that the critic's objective is "to recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty." It goes without saying that Trilling's best criticism—including *The Opposing Self* (1955), *Beyond Culture* (1965), and *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972)—fulfills this function, and he remains perhaps liberalism's best internal critic. The problem is that a decade or so after he wrote his famous preface, liberalism was splintering, "its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility" descending into nihilistic chaos. In retrospect, Trilling was defending a tradition in which the concept of ultimate things led ineluctably to the Molotov cocktail.

Gregory J. Sullivan is a graduate student at Villanova University.

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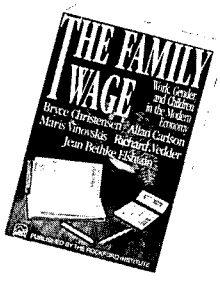

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Letter From Albion

by Andrei Navrozov

The Banality of Fiction

◆

It's Sunday morning in London. *The Sunday Times* is here. (Yes, we too have a *Sunday Times*.) The "Week in Review" section is nice and fat. (Yes, it's nice and fat here, too.) Headline: "End Game: Why the Soviets are pulling out of Afghanistan." Photo of Najibullah, photo of Gorbachev, photo of two smiling soldiers. Read-out, in bold: "After eight years tied down to a futile war in Afghanistan, Russia is pulling out." Sample paragraph: "Gorbachev's personal intervention has underlined his conviction that his own prestige, and hence the fate of his *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies, is at stake."

Yes, it's Sunday morning in London. Reading the "Report by Askold Krushelnycky, with Stephen Milligan in Washington and Angus Roxburgh in Moscow," fills one with the numb certainty of being in the West. Does truth matter, especially on a Sunday? Is the war futile? Is Russia pulling out? What are Gorbachev's convictions? Who is Gorbachev? What is "prestige"? What are "policies"? Where is the "Travel" section?

Ah, here's the "Travel" section. Let's see. Headline: "USA: Taking a small bite out of the Big Apple." Photo caption: "Central Park: host to wide open spaces, deck chairs and baseball games in a noisy, humorous city where everyone seems to be acting a movie part." Photo of two black men watching a baseball game from folding chairs, with New York's skyline in the background. Read-out, in bold: "What could be more romantic than a weekend in Manhattan, sampling exotic cuisine in Greenwich Village, before flexing your sterling muscles in Bloomingdales? Or how about a movie and basketball in Boston? The strong pound and airline rivalry mean a US weekend makes financial sense — if you can stand the pace."

At this moment, one becomes aware of the fantastic, improbable truth that the author of the travel article is the very man who wrote the report on Afghanistan. No, not figuratively speaking. Literally: both articles have issued from the pen of Askold Krushelnycky, whoever he is, to appear side by side on the same Sunday in the same newspaper. Let us take a closer look at the author's Manhattan odyssey.

> I took a yellow cab to my friend's apartment on West 119th Street near Colombia University and we later took the subway into Manhattan. . . . On Friday I took the subway into Madison Avenue. I knew from the movies that it was the proper time to have coffee and a doughnut in one of the hundreds of little eateries where people dive in for breakfast and the newspapers. . . . Next day, catching up on the cultural programme, I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art.

And so on. It's all here, isn't it: "yellow cab" (local color), "apartment" (rather than "flat," since it's important to use some quaint local expressions), "Colombia" (well, what's the difference, ultimately?), the subway ride from West 119th Street in Manhattan "into" the magical, distant "Manhattan" (it could be a figure of speech, after all), "hundreds of little eateries" (not on Madison, perhaps, but on some other street), the "Metropolitan Museum" (not that far, really, from the Museum of Modern Art, especially by taxi) . . . Take a deep breath. Think of some universal application of this twaddle. There must be a column in this.

A recent novel, described by reviewers here as "exciting," "extraordinary," and "remarkable," is set in Moscow. "Does this come off?" the hero is asked about the hair on his chest in a moment of playful passion. "His voice was muffled. 'Does it unzip, you mean — like a gorilla suit?'" Now, the truth is that nobody in Russia has ever seen such a suit.

Centuries ago, when educated Europeans knew nothing of Russia except its mica and leather, "a Muscovian duke" named Astolfo was credible in a Calderón play. Beyond the limits of Europe, in the words of a Shakespearean scholar, "monsters dwelt and miracles were common." Yet such nescience was hardly an impediment to the writers of the day, Shakespeare among them, for even when they borrowed a character, or a setting, from that distant wonderland, it was invariably their own world they aimed to describe, and describe truthfully.

The world in which we live has witnessed a metamorphosis of imaginative thinking in our literature that parallels the ethical collapse of Dostoyevsky's nihilist heroes a century ago. If man can become cockroach (since everything is allowed), if waiting for Godot is life (since anything is possible), if all things are equally likely (except for nuclear holocaust, which is inevitable), why should a writer bother with the "truth"? "What's gotten into you today, I don't understand," says a character in a 1930's Russian play. "The truth, the truth! I've been telling myself the truth for so long that I've forgotten what the damn thing looks like!"

Indeed, any "fiction" will do — the more absurd, the better. A gorilla suit in Moscow? Well, it cannot be claimed with *absolute* certainty that one has never found its way there. A cannibal in Manhattan? Surely stranger things *have* happened. The fate of *glasnost* and *perestroika* is at stake? Who is to say it isn't?

Mass culture conforms to the highbrow. A "soap" heroine, abducted by the exigencies of plot and contract, disappears in a flying saucer. A travel writer for a national newspaper tells of his journey from West 119th Street "into Manhattan." If life is absurd, why should it matter that there are no Martians, or that 119th Street is in Manhattan?

The tabloid mind is no longer a thing to conceal. Magazines, from *Newsweek* to *Town & Country*, proudly fabricate social phenomena. Kremlinologists, astrologers, and just plain liars are in demand at the White House. Corporate tycoons openly believe in cryonic resurrection.

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One begins to understand Tom Wolfe's passion for exactitude, even if it means knowing a character by the price of his suit. Whatever its other merits, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* is a rare event on the literary scene because it is accurate. Yet what a storm of critical controversy have Wolfe's price lists unleashed! Brand names, dialects, prices are too close to the truth, and do not belong in good "fiction." Once a journalist, always a journalist (as a Russian émigré *grande dame* once said of Dostoyevsky). By contrast, a novel about a dinner party that ends with the guests eating each other is literature.

Chekhov, by whose prose world culture is to be measured, never wrote a single line of "fiction." Nor did he ever attempt to write a novel: too artificial, too contrived, too pretentious. The Russian language has no word for "fiction"—only "prose"—and a quick look in the Oxford dictionary confirms that the English word has an appallingly undistinguished pedigree. ("Books," Emerson wrote in his *Journal*, "are the destruction of literature.")

What would Chekhov (or Emerson) think of our best-seller lists, divided into "fiction" and "nonfiction"? The division is spurious, not because every writer must be like Chekhov and describe life as truthfully as he can, but because the spiritual relativism of contemporary Western literature obliterates all such distinctions. Like Socialist Realism in post-1917 Russia, it devalues honesty, imagination, and style, replacing them with an inflated currency of sterile, conformist inventions, eagerly published, promptly reviewed, and quickly forgotten. Shall we call it Capitalist Surrealism? Or is "fiction" banal enough?

Literature is not everything. But it is a symptom, and those who care about literature can extrapolate the point to comprehend the cultural crisis as a whole. Are not the dominant trends of Western foreign policy (e.g., Kissinger's détente), or psychology (e.g., Freudian psychoanalysis), or journalism (e.g., Krushelnycky's reporting) based on the same disregard for the truth that distinguishes our literature? Something to think about.

Andrei Navrozov is poetry editor of Chronicles.

Letter From Paris

by Curtis Cate

A Visual Atrocity

◆

It used to be a pleasure to cross the Seine from the Left Bank to the Right, and to pause for a moment by the Louvre to take in that glorious vista, admired by innumerable busloads of tourists and many others besides: the view one gets, framed by the graceful central arch of the diminutive Arch of Triumph of the Carrousel, of the fountain-filled Tuileries Gardens, of the Place de la Concorde, and up the sloping Champs-Elysées to its crowning monument, Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe. But the pleasure—for me at any rate—is now marred by the sight of a cancerous growth of grayish concrete smudging the distant horizon. I can never view this visual outrage without asking myself how such a thing could come to pass. Can it be that the French, who from the late Renaissance on and through most of the 18th century succeeded the Italians as the finest architects in Europe, have totally lost that sense of aesthetic elegance and measure that so long distinguished them?

Years ago, in a blistering article entitled "The Gangsters of the Appian Way," Niccolo Tucci tore into the vandals who, he claimed, were disfiguring that ancient roadway with neon signs, gas stations, and other modern commodities. The Appian Way, he pointed out, did not belong to the Romans, nor to the Italians, nor even to the Europeans; it belongs to history, to mankind, to the world.

I feel the same way about that incomparable Carrousel-Tuileries-Champs-Elysées vista, which a new generation of French vandals—and they include, alas, President François Mitterrand—have disgracefully disfigured and, skyscrapers and high-rise buildings being easier to put up than to tear down, perhaps irreparably desecrated for the foreseeable future.

In a typically grandiloquent passage of his memoirs, Charles de Gaulle once called the Champs-Elysées *"le plus grand axe du monde."* The Champs-Elysées may be praised for many things, but it is not "the greatest axis in the world" either in length or in width—as de Gaulle, who was something of a German scholar, should have known. In the 18th century the Berliners decided to prolong their broadest, tree-lined avenue, Unter den Linden, in a westerly direction, and the result was an enormously wide boulevard running on for miles through the so-called Tiergarten (originally a deer-filled wood) and the village of Charlottenburg almost as far as the Havel Lake. In terms of beauty this "great axis" cannot stand comparison with the Champs-Elysées. This is because the Brandenburg Gate, with its severe Doric columns, is a ponderous piece of neoclassic architecture compared to Paris's two arches of triumph, while the Siegessäule, or Victory Column, which was put up to commemorate Bismarckian Prussia's successive battlefield triumphs over Denmark, Austria, and France, is an ugly specimen of late-19th-century pomposity.

If the Parisians were luckier, it was as much by accident as by design. The enchantingly but deceptively named Champs-Elysées (Elysian Fields) was originally a wood extending from the western limits of the Tuileries Gardens (one of Catherine de Médicis' gifts to the city) all the way to the crest of a hill, which extended southward toward the villages of Chaillot and Auteuil. Through this wood, for the benefit of riders and horse-drawn carriages, was cut a sandy swathe leading westward over the crest of the hill and down the other side and across a loop of the Seine and so on as far as Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In 1807 Napoleon decided to crown this wooded crest with a monumental Arch of Triumph, which was intended to be far grander than the recently completed Arch of Triumph in Rome.

In 1789—the convulsive year that the French will soon be commemorating—the Phrygian-bonneted revolutionaries had gone on a rampage and proceeded to tear down the Bastille (no loss, it had always been an eyesore) and also Louis XIV's final, old-age "folly," the Chateau de Marly, near Versailles. Fortunately, they spared several magnificent equestrian statues, sculpted by Coustou and Coysevox. Later someone had the brilliant idea of moving them into Paris,

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where their copies (the original marble pieces are now housed in the Louvre) adorn the western gates of the Tuileries Gardens and the start of the Champs-Elysées on the other side of the Place de la Concorde.

The revolutionaries of 1789 also decided to demolish the equestrian statue of Louis XV, which used to grace the center of what was then called the Place Royale. For almost half a century the renamed Place de la Concorde lacked a centerpiece, Robespierre and his successors having been unable to produce anything more inspiring than eight stony-bottomed goddesses, each symbolizing a different French city. But in 1833, when an Egyptian obelisk from Luxor (the gift of the viceroy, Mohammed Ali) reached Paris, it was decided to place it in the central spot that had once been graced by Louis XV on horseback. The result was a visual miracle, and like most miracles, it was accidental.

It only remained for another group of revolutionary fanatics — those of the 1871 Commune — to complete their work of destruction, by not only looting but gutting Philibert Delorme's Renaissance Palace of the Tuileries, for the present miraculous vista to be opened up — all the way from the Louvre and the smaller Arch of the Carrousel past the graceful obelisk of Luxor to the monumental Arc de Triomphe in the distance.

But, alas, for a number of years past a new group of wreckers have been busy ruining this unique vista. About 20 years ago it was decided that Paris had become such a congested, car-crammed metropolis that it was imperative to construct a new business center beyond the city limits. Thus was born a kind of urban satellite, composed of skyscrapers and high-rise buildings, located on the heights beyond the Seine, two miles west of the Arc de Triomphe. One might have thought that the planners of this satellite city, intended to provide office space for multinational and other large corporations, would have taken pains not to place their skyscrapers in the visual *axe de mire*, and sufficiently removed to the left and right to allow the Arc de Triomphe to stand out, as before, in all of its solitary splendor. But not at all. With a callous disregard for visual aesthetics they erected their Cyclopean structures almost directly in the "line of fire." The result is that the beautiful cornices of Gabriel's townhouses (now the Ministry of Marine and the Hotel de Crillon) are no longer outlined against the pure blue or cloudy sky, as one drives up the Rue de Rivoli. Even worse, Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe, viewed from the Louvre or the Place de la Concorde, now seems hemmed in by somber blocks of concrete towering up over the distant horizon.

The final touch to this work of visual desecration has been added by Mitterrand himself. To "crown" the concrete mountain range beyond the Seine, he decided that a soaring "Gateway" was needed — doubtless to *épater* (dumbfound) the bourgeois and to arouse the enthusiasm of the toiling (but also tasteless) masses. It is not easy to describe the crass ugliness of this piece of "architecture," if such it can be called. It consists of two vertical slabs of concrete, 105 meters apart, joined at the top by another huge horizontal slab, and pompously entitled the "Arc de Triomphe de l'Humanité." The horizontal slab is so high that even though it is located two miles farther west, it forms an aerial bar and looks like a piece of scaffolding running across the broad arch of Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe to anyone coming up the Champs-Elysées. Unfortunately, unlike scaffolding, this monument of demagogic fatuity cannot easily be removed — unless some terrorist chooses to blow it up, for which achievement he would certainly deserve a Légion d'Honneur medal — and it is likely to remain a permanent eyesore for years to come.

To give Mitterrand his due, it should be said that he has only been walking in the footsteps of his equally tasteless predecessors. In the early 1960's, the then prime minister, Michel Debré, decided that Gaullist France could not become a truly great power unless Paris could boast at least one skyscraper. The result was the 45-story Tour Montparnasse, which wrecked havoc on the old bohemian Montparnasse quarter dear to Modigliani, Picasso, Hemingway, Henry Miller, and Sandy Calder, and which, because it was located in the wrong place, shattered the graceful skyline of Gabriel's Ecole Militaire, when viewed from the Eiffel Tower and the Champs de Mars. Somewhat later President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing also heeded the sirens' song of the "modernists" and to honor his predecessor, Georges Pompidou, a tubular monstrosity — a Fernand Léger painting expressed in plastic form — was erected just east of the central Halles market area. Need I add that this eyesore has now overtaken the Louvre, Versailles, and the Cathedral of Chartres as the most visited monument in France?

It remains to be seen if the absurd "Arch of Triumph of Mankind," west of Paris, will in its turn overtake the grotesque "Centre Georges Pompidou" as a gigantic tourist attraction. For those who have never heard of Pierre Lescot, Jean Goujon, Philibert Delorme, Le Vau, the two Hardouins, Gabriel, and the landscape architect Le Nôtre (all of whom must be squirming in their graves), it might just do that. But if the colossal, as Oswald Spengler once suggested, is a symptom of decline, then the Fifth Republic is *en pleine décadence*.

Curtis Cate is a historian and biographer who lives in Paris.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

US Out of Dixie

◆

Browsing at a local newsstand the other day, I spied a startling comic book, issue #11 of *Captain Confederacy*. Its $1.95 price was even more startling (the last comic book I bought, back about aught-56, cost something like 15 cents), but I had to take this one home, and did. Let me tell you about it.

In the book, it is the present, in a South that won the Civil War. The protagonist is an actor who plays Captain Confederacy, a superhero in Confederate television propaganda films. His former girlfriend is the actress who plays the captain's companion, Miss Dixie. There are a dozen or so supporting characters, including "Monsieur Hex," an underground agent from Free Louisiana, and Dr. Kitsune Lee, a Japanese woman a/k/a "the White Ninja."

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The story has something to do with a resistance movement against a Confederacy that looks rather like South Africa. President Lee apparently freed the slaves in the 1870's, but signs still say things like "Whites Only Beyond This Point." (The Great Emancipator was the *first* President Lee. The current president, a woman, is a Lee, too.) Coming in at issue #11 as I did leaves much to be desired, but the plot does seem confusing, not to say silly.

Nevertheless, there's much to enjoy here. In particular, the letters section offers some engaging speculation from readers. There seems to be general agreement that, in this world, the fragmentation of the US didn't stop with the 1860 War. Texas soon split off from the Confederacy, and California became a separate country, too, along with adjoining parts of Mexico. To the north is the Commonwealth of Columbia, where (with no federal government to build dams) happy Native American salmon fishers have largely escaped history. Some of the letters are ingenious; one, for example, explains why the Girl Scouts are found in the Confederacy and Texas, and the Campfire Girls in the US and Deseret.

Some incidental touches are nice, too. One panel shows a can of Stars and Bars Beer; the *Good Morning Dixie* television program offers an offhand reference to "the Yucatan Territory uprising"; and there's a baseball card for Fidel Castro, power-hitting left fielder for the Havana Smokes of the Confederate League. (At $2.00 a pop, I decided against a complete set of *Captain Confederacy*, but you can get one or all of the 12 available issues from the Steel Dragon Press, at Box 7253, Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis 55407. Yes: Minneapolis.)

The authors of *Captain Confederacy* are by no means the first to wonder in print about what the world would be like if the ragged legions of the CSA had swept to victory; there seem to be almost enough books on the subject for us to call it a subgenre. But they sure are hard to track down. A friend tells me that Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* (1953) is one example, and Harry Harrison's *A Rebel in Time* (1983) is another. I'm especially determined to find the latter; it's about a 20th-century sympathizer who travels back in time to show the Confederates how to make automatic weapons.

One of the best-known such treatments (and one I have read) is by MacKinlay Kantor, the author of *Andersonville*. In his unimaginatively-titled *If the South Had Won the Civil War*, as I recall, the South wins after Grant is thrown from a horse and killed. When slavery proves economically unviable, naturally the slaves are freed. As in *Captain Confederacy*, the secession of Texas reveals the inherent weakness of the Confederate constitution—or, alternatively, the devotion of Southerners to their principles. Eventually, however, Texas, the Confederacy, and what is left of the US are happily reunited after they make common cause against 20th-century totalitarianism. Kantor's book was published in 1961, and shows it.

By now, five generations of white Southerners have enjoyed the counterhistorical fantasy of Confederate victory and Southern independence. In fact, that fantasy antedates the Confederacy itself. In 1860, Edmund Ruffin published *Anticipations of the Future*, a hostile response to the impending election of Abraham Lincoln in which the South endures eight years of Lincolnian tyranny before striking a successful blow for independence.

As time has passed, though, the image of an independent Confederate States of America has become droller. As in *Captain Confederacy*, the juxtaposition of Confederate imagery and the accoutrements of modern life makes for some cute effects. Here, for instance, is Will Barrett, in Walker Percy's *The Last Gentleman*. Will is 20 miles from Richmond:

> As he ate Ritz crackers and sweet butter, he imagined how Richmond might be today if the war had ended differently. Perhaps Main Street would be the Wall Street of the South, and Broad might vie with New Orleans for opera and theater. Here in the White Oak Swamp might be located the great Lee-Randolph complex, bigger than GM and making better cars (the Lee surpassing both Lincoln and Cadillac, the Lil' Reb outselling even Volkswagens). Richmond would have five million souls by now, William and Mary be as good as Harvard and less subverted. In Chattanooga and Mobile there would be talk of the "tough, cynical Richmonders," the Berliners of the hemisphere.

Sometimes, as here, images of an independent Southland are used only to amuse. Other times, though, as for Edmund Ruffin, they have served contemporary political purposes.

Consider, for instance, last October's Country Music Association awards program. Just before Hank Williams Jr. won his second straight Entertainer of the Year Award, he regaled the TV audience with his current hit, "If the South Would Have Won (We'd Have Had It Made)." If you can leave aside the grammar (my wife can't, or won't), it's quite a song.

If the South had won, Hank sang cheerfully, he'd run for President and put the Supreme Court in Texas, so murderers would swing, "instead of writing books and going on TV." You wonder why Lloyd Bentsen and whatsisname were doomed before they started in the South?

Hank goes on. He'd have all the cars made in Carolina, and he'd "ban all the ones made in China." (OK, so geography's not his strong point, but all those Oriental cars do sort of look alike, don't they?) Far be it from me to give the Democrats advice, but protectionism and xenophobia *à la* Gephart might have played better than what they came up with.

There's much more where this came from, but the point is that plainly the song's subtext was a disparaging commentary on the election of 1988. Surely it's no accident that the idea of a victorious Confederacy made it to network television and the *Billboard* country music top ten at just the time last fall that some of us down here were biting our tongues while old George went on about the Pledge of Allegiance—not because we agreed with whatsisname, but because, deep down, we're still not sure about "indivisible."

John Shelton Reed reads comic books and listens to country music in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

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THE ACADEMY

Who Is Pete Schaub?

by Nicholas Davidson

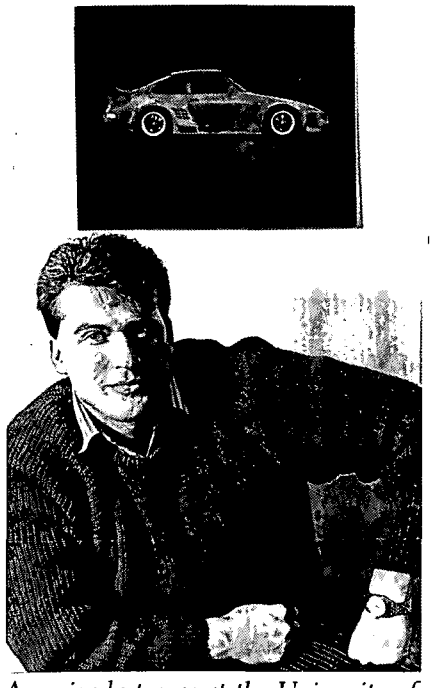
When Pete Schaub, a business major in his senior year at the University of Washington at Seattle, couldn't get into an overenrolled business course for the first quarter of 1988, he signed up for "Women 200: Introduction to Women Studies" instead. He was expecting to learn about "the history of women and the contributions that they have made," as the course book described it. Instead, Schaub would be harassed, expelled from class, and publicly defamed.

Schaub's mother was a rebel in the 60's who divorced his father when she was 21 and moved to rural Washington to live close to the land. There Schaub grew up among the farms of the Skagit Valley, where he acquired the mild drawl of its inhabitants, and a strong sense of justice defending his black stepbrothers (his aunt's children) against local bullies. Today, at six foot one, Schaub is a bodybuilder, a teetotaler, has run a construction crew to support himself in college, and drives a Porsche 924 which he recently repainted red. Not your standard 80's Wimp. Schaub is also smart, articulate, and very upset.

"Introduction to Women Studies" was taught by two women in their 20's, Donna Langston and DanaMichele, who had taught the course nine and three times before, respectively. (Born Dana Brown, DanaMichele discarded her last name as a protest against "patriarchy.")

Several of the 14 teachers' aides (including Schaub's) were freshmen, whose only academic credential was to have taken the course in the previous quarter. The students report that these freshmen were responsible for grading papers by seniors.

Many outside friends of the instructors and the TA's stopped by to participate in the course. "They had anywhere between 30 and 40 people acting as crowd control," says Schaub. "Anyone who did finally get the nerve up to ask a question or raise a point," wrote student Greg Adams in a letter to the



A senior last year at the University of Washington, Schaub was pilloried for asking questions in a women's studies course.

University of Washington *Daily*, "was immediately verbally mobbed by the instructor and 'facilitators.'"

As an example of the prevailing atmosphere, says Shirley Hamblin, a student who took verbatim notes of much of the course for a visually-impaired student, instructor DanaMichele alleged in one class that "the traditional American family represents a dysfunctional family unit." Students who protested that their own families were functional were assailed by TA's shouting "Denial, denial!" in unison.

The textbook, *Changing Our Power*, consisted of a set of writings by the instructors, such as the following poem by Donna Langston:

> I just love the smell of me
> closest thing I got to
> the taste of you
> now that you've left
> at first I searched my
> cupboards far and wide
> was it Pringles or Mr. Chips
> or would Haagen Dazs eaten
> along with tortilla chips
> provide the proper
> salty sweet combination of you
> little did I know I'd
> find the flavor so close to home.

"One of their guest speakers came and taught women how to masturbate," says Schaub. "They said that you do not need a man. They proceeded to show them how to masturbate with a feather duster, and they did have a dildo right there." At the end of the lecture, according to several of those present, including TA Sarah Hirsh, the lecturer held up the dildo and said, "This one has my name on it." The talk was illustrated with a closeup of female genitalia, projected onto a 12-foot screen at the front of the classroom.

Schaub got off to a bad start with the course instructors by calling one of them "ma'am" at an early course meeting; she stingingly rebuked him for this "sexist" remark.

Schaub says—and those present, including Sarah Hirsh, agree—that he only asked a total of four or five questions during the six weeks he was in the course. Schaub insists that his few questions were "meek"—"requests for clarification only." Although he was later accused of "disruptive behavior" and "shouting obscenities," most students were apparently not even aware of his presence in the class. For example, Shirley Hamblin reports that when Schaub's demeanor became an issue, the reaction of many students was bewilderment. "Who is Pete Schaub?" they asked.

As an example of the tenor of his questions, Schaub describes an incident

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that occurred after a class in which DanaMichele asserted that US government statistics showed that lesbians could raise children better than married couples could. Schaub says that he simply asked her if he could have the source.

"I asked after class, even," he says. "I didn't want to look like I was challenging her. I just said, 'I couldn't write quick enough—I'm wondering if you could tell me where you got that, so I can go look it up and get the information.'

"She wouldn't hear of it. She told me, 'Why are you challenging me? Get away from me! Just leave me alone!'

"Right there," he continues, "one of her friends who was in the class came down and called me 'a f-----g male chauvinist goddamn bastard.'" The student, Elizabeth Dougherty, denies she said this, according to an account in the Seattle *Weekly*. Shirley Hamblin, though, who was also present, reports that Dougherty "was shrieking" and that "her mouth was in Pete's ear."

When Schaub showed up for class the next morning, he was informed by Donna Langston that she was "banning him from class." To make her point, she had two campus police officers waiting at the back of the hall, who escorted Schaub away.

"What was his crime?" Hamblin asked in a letter to the UW *Daily*. "He asked questions. He challenged instructors to support their claims."

Schaub was not the only student to be harassed for showing some independence of mind. Mary Seward is 38, married with three children, stands five foot one-and-a-half inches tall, weighs 110 pounds, and is legally blind. Seward says that after she politely questioned one particularly implausible statement by a guest lecturer (to whit, that Mexicans have large families to compensate for Spanish genocide in the 16th century), she was dressed down for an hour and a half after class by DanaMichele, who told her, "Your body language is hostile and threatening."

When Hamblin made an announcement on behalf of Schaub on March 1, DanaMichele came over to her and said, "I really think you should start being concerned about your personal safety." When Hamblin demanded to know exactly what she meant, DanaMichele quickly denied that she had made a threat, and said, "You have to be concerned about your personal safety from Pete Schaub"—thus replacing a threat with slander. (The women's studies forces later accused Schaub of threatening them. But when pressed on this point by local reporters, the only examples of threats they could produce were along the lines of, "It's not a safe world for women, and people were afraid to walk home because of someone like Pete Schaub. He's big and he's hostile. It doesn't have to be more specific than that." "If that is threatening," responds Schaub, "I have been threatened many times. I've seen many big people.")

Schaub protested his banning to the university administration. Administrators declined to hold an open investigation to clear him, as he requested. (Indeed, Schaub says campus authorities have never asked him for his version of events.) The dean of students did, however, reinstate Schaub in the course after several weeks—with the suggestion that he not attend further class meetings. (Repeated phone calls to UW Vice President for Student Affairs Stephen Nord were not returned.)

Schaub's technical reinstatement was still too much for local feminists, who organized a series of demonstrations against him in March and April 1988. "He's just a beer-drinking arrogant guy," they told reporters. (As noted, Schaub is a teetotaler.)

To further undermine Schaub's credibility, the Women Studies Department took out a full-page ad in the UW *Daily*. Transparently referring to Schaub as "one of the disruptive students" who had been quoted in "articles in local newspapers," the ad accused "several students" of "obscene and abusive language in the classroom" (no details or evidence were provided). The ad was paid for with taxpayer-supplied university funds.

The first demonstration against Schaub, according to students who witnessed it, was assembled right outside the classroom. One of its leaders, Annette Sacksteder, was allowed into the classroom by Donna Langston, DanaMichele, and the acting director of the Women Studies Department, Sue Ellen Jacobs. Annette Sacksteder and a TA addressed the room, urging the students to leave class and join the demonstration. Donna Langston then announced that any student wishing to leave the classroom that day would be excused without penalty. About 20 students actually left at that point, some to participate in the demonstration and others to watch it. The demonstrators, with reporters and TV cameras following, marched over to the dean's office to protest Schaub's reinstatement. When they found the office deserted and locked, they pounded on the door and tried unsuccessfully to break it open. When Schaub showed up and was identified, the crowd encircled him and chanted, "Stop sexual harassment!"

A second demonstration was held a few days later to protest the alleged "unfair media coverage" of the first one. At the third demonstration, though, on April 6, the crowd was behind Schaub. "We support Pete! We support Pete!" they chanted.

The women studies forces at UW are being, to put it mildly, less than forthcoming about the Schaub affair. Messages for Langston left with the Womens Studies Department elicited no response. DanaMichele's telephone number has been disconnected. After failing to return a phone message, the head of the department, Sue Ellen Jacobs, objected strongly to being called at home. Jacobs said she could suggest no one to present the women's studies side of the case. A woman at the UW Women's Information Center declined to recommend any sources and refused to give her name. The local women's studies forces seem to have realized that the tide has turned against them, and to be hoping that the whole matter will be forgotten if they just keep quiet. Jacobs says that the Pete Schaub affair "has gone on too damn long."

But Schaub has been telling his

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story on national television shows and is planning legal action, though it is not yet clear where he will find the necessary funding. (The Women Studies Department will automatically be defended in any lawsuit by the state attorney general's office, with access to public funds.)

Was the way "Introduction to Women Studies" was taught last year unusual? Greg Adams, who took the course in the fall of 1986, says that "there was one different instructor, but it was the same approach." Both the teaching methods, such as the use of the TA's for crowd control, and the themes covered, as in the masturbation lecture, were the same in all significant aspects. Indeed, Adams says that students who took the course *"ten years ago* say it was just the same then."

Is the course "an aberration" within the Women Studies Department? Sue Ellen Jacobs rejects this notion and strongly defends the course as it exists. The course, she says, is entirely consistent with other courses offered by the department. She emphasizes that "it is still one of our most popular courses" and insists that "we will not change the substance of it." Both she personally, and the department in general, stand behind the course "absolutely."

Is women's studies at the University of Washington different from women's studies nationwide? Michael Levin, a philosophy professor at City College in New York, has examined women's studies as a general phenomenon, attending the classes, reading the texts assigned, and talking with women's studies scholars. He reports on his inquiries in *Feminism and Freedom* (Transaction Books, 1987). According to Levin, the field is characterized by its "wholly political character." Three of the texts most widely used in women's studies courses focus on "lesbianism, masturbation, and rape," on "the author's dissatisfaction with male lovemaking," and some even promote the "advocacy of incest."

"Women's studies course materials," Levin writes, "ignore customary features of instruction at the university level," notably "the presentation of both sides of disputed issues." Even "the most objective texts balance twenty or thirty selections by feminists with one or two short selections by critics." In addition, "[w]omen's studies instructors are notorious for penalizing students critical of feminism."

We may well ask: who is Pete Schaub?

Nicholas Davidson is author of The Failure of Feminism *(Prometheus Books, 1988) and editor of* Gender Sanity, *an anthology of critics of feminism (forthcoming from University Press of America).*

STAGE

The Passion of Patsy

by Jeffrey Essmann

The lights come up on an old woman holding a candle. It is Auntie Rula.

RULA

Do you hear a child crying in the cellar? Yes, yes, it is you, Patsy! Back again to haunt your old Auntie Rula. But why are you crying, child? Or are you laughing? Crying, laughing—with you, they always sounded the same. Ah yes, to you, to the world, she is Nadia Mulvenya Porochnjik, the great Croat poetess. The name Nadia has so many diminutives: Nadi, Nadji, Dadi, Didi, Dina, Dani, Nana, Donna, Dodo. But me, I always called her Patsy. And before she ever sang to you, she sang to goats.

She turns and, through a slight adjustment of her shawl, becomes a girl of 16, reciting a poem to a goat.

PATSY

Walking along the road of life,
I hadn't journeyed very far
When someone pulled over,
his name was Death.
I didn't know he had a car.

She looks to the goat, hopefully.

Oh, you always say the same thing about my poems: Nya-a-a-a-a-h! But you shan't upset me today; it's my birthday!

She curtsies.

Why, thank you. Mama is having a party for me! Uncle Nathan's going to be there, and Auntie Rula and cousin Irena. Mama said I could even invite my own friends. I wanted to invite you. "Oh, he'll just stink up the house," Mama said. Isn't love supposed to smell?

She turns again.

The dining room table is covered with Grandma Porochnjik's good lace tablecloth and on top of it are the candles we use only on Croatian holidays. There's a huge tureen of blood sausage and beets; there's pickled onions, and cabbage pudding and turnips carved to look like roses! I'm just about to pick one when from behind me I hear a voice:

Imitating Uncle Nathan's gravelly baritone:

"Now there's a young lady I could eat!" It's Uncle Nathan! He's wearing his new leg and wants to dance.

She curtsies coquettishly and begins to dance—a waltz interposed with limp hops.

While we're dancing, Gregor, the gardener, comes in and asks if cousin Irena would like to see his bush. Irena laughs and goes out with him—and suddenly I smell goats.

Her arms transform from holding a dance partner to holding a box.

A present!

She tears it open furiously.

A dress! A dress with a zipper!

She spins with glee, but when she is forward again we see that it is years later. She takes up a pen, dips it in an inkwell and begins to write.

October 30, 1912. I never wore that dress. Just as I opened the box Mama began to hiccup and couldn't stop. We thought it funny at first, but then it went on all night and by morning she had to be taken to the sanatorium at Zlatny.

She bounces as if in a train.

Auntie Rula and Uncle Nathan have invited me to come live with them in Zagreb.

She disembarks and steps onto the street.

I'm excited by the big city with its electric lights and sausage stands.

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Smiles to herself.

Auntie Rula says it doesn't look right, a girl eating sausage on the street. She doesn't know how it helps my poems:

Knockwurst, blutwurst,
Knocking on a heart
Ready to burst.
Sensation sweet,
Love's ache keener.
I only know it,
Eating wieners.

She sits and tats.

Strange to be writing poetry in the midst of so much violence. A war's broken out: Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro have attacked Turkey, and Serbia's overrun Albania. Thank God I'm Croat. Still, Uncle Nathan's gone off to the front. "War or no war," he says, "people still need postcards." Auntie Rula's very brave, and Irena's too busy with her suitors to care much at all.

Pause.

I don't have any suitors. Oh, it's silly really. I have my studies and my poetry. I don't have time for boys.

She turns and it is a year later.

August 12, 1913. I've met a boy! A young student I met on the trolley. I dropped a turnip, he picked it up and asked if I'd like to go for a sausage. I said yes, and suddenly felt as if all of Zagreb were watching me! While we ate, we talked about the war. Now Serbia's attacked Macedonia, so Bulgaria's attacked Serbia, so Greece, Turkey, and Rumania are attacking Bulgaria. Gavvy—his name's Gavrilo—he's Serbian. But I don't care! I don't care if the whole world knows!

She walks upstage and turns. She is calmer now; her voice lower.

Valentine's Day, 1914. Today I am a woman. I have known love, I have found peace, a peace nothing in this world can destroy. Each night as I leave the house, Irena says, "Seeing your Serb again?" How I pity her with her hard lips grown crusty at the corners from drinking too swiftly from the cup of love.

She turns and is quite exhilarated.

Ring, bells, ring! Sing, heart, sing! Oh, blessed, blessed day! Gavrilo's asked me to marry him! Auntie Rula says I'm to wear the same Croatian wedding harness Grandma Porochnjik wore on her wedding day. Uncle Nathan will lead me through the streets of Zagreb and each maiden will offer me a carrot as I pass. So it's settled, then! I'm to become Mrs. Gavrilo Princip!

June 15, 1914. Gavrilo's edgy lately, spending less time with me and more with that Serbian crowd of his. Is it the engagement? I throw myself into my poems. More philosophical now: is rhyme necessary? And then I wonder: what ever happened to Mama?

Dejection turns into exasperation. She mops herself with a handkerchief.

June 25. Heat unbearable. Zagreb a cesspool. Gavrilo and I argue in cafe—him with that Serbian nonsense again; me with my rhyme schemes. Says he needs space, going to Sarajevo for a couple days. The Archduke'll be passing through. Maybe the excitement will do him good.

She turns and exasperation has become despair.

June 28, 1914. I can't believe it! The Archduke has been assassinated and all the papers say Gavrilo did it! Now Austria-Hungary's declared war on Serbia, Germany's declared war on Russia, and France and Great Britain have declared war on Germany. Irena's just gloating!

Oh, war! War!
What is it good for?

She turns and, through an adjustment of her shawl, she is once again Auntie Rula. Her eyes are moist with tears.

RULA

Absolutely nothing. The next day Patsy left Zagreb for a small farm just outside Vlonjic where she lived alone for the rest of her life. Did I say alone? No, she was never alone. She always had the goats.

She struggles against the tears.

When she died, in the cellar we found over 2,000 poems—and every one of them rhymed. What courage!

The Eastern European folk music swells as she blows out the candle and the lights fade.

Born in Wisconsin, Jeffrey Essmann is now a performance artist living in New York City. *Copyright © 1988 by Jeffrey Essmann.*

PUBLISHING

The World of the Small Press

by Thomas McGonigle

If your local bookstore does not stock *Wittgenstein's Mistress* by David Markson, *Guilty* by Georges Bataille, *Altazor* by Vincente Huidobro, *Compact* by Maurice Roche, *Space in Motion* by Juan Goytisolo, *I-57* by Paul Metcalf, *Concierto Barroco* by Alejo Carpentier, or *Cold Tales* by Virgilio Pinera, you're living in a culturally deprived area.

All these books were published during the last year by small literary presses. In France bookstores are seen as cultural resources, but here in the States we make do with B. Dalton's. Unfortunately, the best way to determine if a bookstore is a literary bookstore is by counting the number of books they carry from the small literary presses. The above list would be a rough measure. If I said there were 20 bookstores in the whole country that had these books in their normal stock, I might be exaggerating.

If your local bookshop has even the slightest literary pretensions, it will make an effort to stock the Black Sparrow Press editions of Wyndham Lewis, Jack Spicer, and Charles Bukowski. If not, maybe we should remember that both Hemingway and Joyce were introduced to the world via the small press. I won't retell the whole history of the small literary presses, but I think it can be taken as a given that the small press is the home for whatever literary culture we have. (There is, of course, another whole world out there filled with books like *How to Wash Your Face See Jesus And Live Forever* . . . sending many a clever entrepreneur whistling to the bank.)

But let's go back to the basics. All publishing shares certain mechanical

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details: you have a manuscript, you get the manuscript printed, you try to sell the book. Money is the determining factor all along the way, but it becomes dominant at the distribution end. The big guys have a very expensive system in place: a network of salesmen who cover limited territories, representing, if it is a really large publisher, only it.

The books are presented to the various wholesalers, jobbers, and retail establishments under the iron law of Time Is Money. The more titles, the less time for each title.

The small presses generally don't have this going for them. Some of the larger small guys have banded together, and they do have sales reps who pound the pavement. However, they have to make their living by offering, along with literary titles, books on how to get those mushrooms growing. (Mushrooms will outsell a "good" novel anytime). If this all sounds like *business* — the selling and promoting of soap powder — you're getting close. Publishing is a business. We are talking about shelf space, line feet, ad budgets, you wash my hand, I'll wash yours . . . we are talking product. So where does the thin volume of poetry end up, that prose work difficult to define? You can guess that one next time you go into Waldenbooks.

The Dial, which had a circulation of only 300, published Thoreau and Emerson. But we know from reading Albert Jay Nock that this was all back when people still read and were not just processing books.

Closer to our time, Gilbert Sorrentino was the editor and founder of *Neon*, one of the key little magazines of the postwar period. The first issue (in 1956) was done in 250 copies and placed in three bookshops in New York and one in San Francisco. No wider distribution was necessary. He did five issues of the magazine and by the end his circulation was 300. The magazine folded in 1960 and Sorrentino went on to *Kulchur*, of which he later wrote:

> *Kulchur* was a remarkable publication because its strength came from the fact that its editorial position was rooted in a true artistic community, and that community was rooted in a great city. It was alive because it grew out of a specific modern movement and because it was necessary to that movement's cohesion. [William Carlos] Williams told me, just before *Neon* began, that a little magazine's only rationale is its editor's belief that the writers he prints must be presented as a group. Anything else is just a collation of pages.

Writing in 1978, Sorrentino made a suggestion which is pertinent and still mostly unfulfilled:

> I suspect that a new magazine — perhaps even one of "criticism and comment," like *Kulchur* — will soon be necessary. The generation that had just begun to write and publish in the mid-sixties has been around for more than a decade. Although the writers of this generation have published in many magazines (published many books as well) and founded many others, they have been curiously and inexplicably uncritical of each other and of everybody else; and everyone seems to like everyone else's work. The situation is oddly passive, and many of the magazines in which these writers appear read like the later issues of *The Floating Bear* — all charm, gossip, and news notes. These younger writers have never established a critical position for themselves; it seems to be beneath them. Perhaps it is. Maybe they are too close to my generation to assault it — certainly they were born, as it were, into an era that was kind to them.

Today there are a great many more magazines and much more activity, but there is no way of telling what will live on into memory. Sticking my neck out, I would say that the most important small presses today are Black Sparrow Press, Dalkey Archive Press, Station Hill, McPherson & Co., Coffee House Press, Amok Press, Jargon Press, Eridanos, Graywolf, and Lapis Press, though I am sure I have missed some. (You can write to Small Press Distributions, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702 and ask for their complete catalogue. They represent more than 300 small presses.)

The small press world is mostly a mirror of the world of big-time publishing, though they'll never admit it. There is the same venality, stupidity, rotten taste, bad ideas, faddishness — all laid on top of even greater incompetence than is displayed by the big guys in probably the worst-run business in America. When culture gets mixed up with money, the world of the small press really gets the bends, because there is so much less money, and the psychological cut and thrust is that much fiercer.

But to answer Sorrentino's question as to why there is no criticism within the small press: you never know whom you'll need when to get a job, or a grant. Also, no one knows who's any good. So how can anyone say anything about anyone?

I know a writer in New Orleans who has a shelf eight feet long on which he has arranged some of the hundreds of magazines in which he has published fiction, poetry, and essays. He has not published a book. No one really knows who he is. Mostly no one reads these magazines. He is a good writer, if you will take my word for it. There are hundreds of writers out there like him with their piles of magazines. I know a poet here in New York who has published the same poem in over 25 different magazines. There has been no overlap in audience and no complaints or comment.

Jack Saunders of Delray Beach, Florida has written 40 books. Two have been printed in hardcover, some of the others in paper. The books are a record of his life and his obsessive interest in why the New York publishers won't publish any of his books about his obsession to be published by a New York publisher.

I know a former editor of the *Brooklyn Review*, a literary magazine connected to the English Department of Brooklyn College. Really, he was telling me, you only have to print up maybe a hundred copies of the magazine, enough to give to the contributors and close friends. No one else is really interested. There have been complaints at the Gotham Book Mart that more people copy addresses of

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poetry magazines in their stock than either read or buy them. There are more people writing poetry than reading it.

My own experience is a good case history. I was a member of The Irish American Cultural Project in New York, and over the years we talked about having a magazine to complement the musical part of the project. We believed there were many Irish Americans who had something to say. Since I had some experience with publishing my own poetry and prose in small magazines, I was elected.

One thing I was sure of: little magazines do not survive if they are run by a committee. I was to be publisher, editor, and printer's devil. I settled on the name, *Adrift*, because that seemed to reflect the mood of the Irish American community through which I moved. I knew a number of writers both in Ireland and in the US, and most of the first issue was solicited from them and from the writers who came to our music events.

Over the years *Adrift* was listed in the various guides to the small press world. Then the avalanche began—hundreds and then thousands of submissions. I can count on my fingers the would-be contributors who had actually read the magazine. To make everything dicier, not many more had read, say, the three writers whom I hold to be the most important in modern Irish literature: Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, and Francis Stuart. This hunger for publication, which as a writer I so well understand, is something to behold. I was not prepared for the deluge, and the situation quickly became desperate: 99 percent of the stuff I received was just that—stuff. When it was not a step-by-step imitation of whoever was the latest in fashion, it was written as if nothing had been written during the last hundred years.

Anyway, I print up a thousand copies of the magazine and get rid of nearly 900. There are 150 subscriptions.

I did three issues of *Adrift* before I asked myself why. I wasn't running *The New Yorker*, which has to come out every week because so much money is at stake. The manuscripts coming in gave me no reason to keep on. You have to understand that an editor of such a magazine will probably read the story or poem more times than the person who wrote it. The poem is read when it comes in, and, if liked, is read again and again. If accepted it is read again to see where it will be placed in the magazine. After it is typeset and proofread, the manuscript is read for corrections, and then a final time, before the paste-up goes off to the printer. When they come back the poem is read again. So an honest, hapless editor is saying to himself upon first seeing a submission: do I want to read this X number of times, again? I can still live, fairly well, with the three issues I have done so far.

My first goal in selecting material for *Adrift* was to establish my view of what was going on in both Irish and Irish American writing. I wanted to publish writing I had not read before, and to pay homage to the writers I had encountered in my years of living in Ireland. I was both honored and pleased to publish Francis Stuart, whose *Blacklist Section H* is one within the small group of absolutely essential books for anyone who wants to know anything about modern Irish writing. James Liddy, Thomas McCarthy, Richard Riordain, and Eamonn Wall are the poets who come first to mind, but to single them out is to slight others who are no less good.

I am still collecting material for the next issue. The money is in the bank. I have poems by John Montague and Thomas Kinsella, among others. I have a story by John Jordan, but he just died. I am still waiting. Sometimes 36 pages can be awfully difficult to fill.

In a recent *Publishers Weekly*, Emiie Capouya, a publishing veteran, announced that he planned to set up a new house and do 15 books a year of literary fiction and serious nonfiction. He was quite pessimistic about the future. "Conglomerate publishers are changing the reading tastes of the country," he said.

My novel, *The Corpse Dream of N. Petkov*, was published in March 1987 by Dalkey Archive Press. This treatment of the death of an anticommunist Bulgarian statesman was reviewed in *The New York Times* in May. The number of copies sold is a secret, since it is my book and well, you know, there are the tax people, and my own frail ego. It received nine more favorable reviews and was the subject of two broadcasts on the Bulgarian Service of Radio Free Europe. It received one unfavorable review in a Bulgarian émigré magazine.

A year and a half after publication I am still happy with the book and the publisher did all he could. It is still available directly from the publisher and can be found in four bookshops in New York City and, I think, two in Wisconsin. I have been congratulated by a number of editors from big New York houses and they are all happy to see *N. Petkov* in print, as long as they didn't have to do it. No one was going to eat lunch at Lutèce off the sales of my book.

Of course, others better known than I have had the same problems. The best book published by a small press in recent years is, to my view, *Poison Pen* by George Garrett. Still available from Stuart Wright Publishers, it is a genuine work of satire. But only a small press could afford to do it: in Stuart Wright's case there's little money to lose and no lawyers to worry about Garrett's to-the-point characterizations.

Today, as I was finishing this piece, I took a break and was walking along Second Avenue, when I ran into one of the publishers of Amok Press. He was dashing home with a new book about William Burroughs, in which Burroughs was quoted as saying that a book Amok is bringing out in two months, *You Can't Win* by Jack Black, was the most important book in Burroughs' life. The publisher tingled with excitement. He was dashing back to rewrite Black's jacket copy. Excitement: you can't knock it, really. (Yes, Amok Press did the collected writings of Charlie Manson. They are interested in the truly marginal—though, after all, Manson stalks American history the same way the killer Moosbrugger stalks the pages of Robert Musil's great novel, *The Man Without Qualities*.) But, I must repeat, the Amok guy was excited about the book. Uptown, they are always excited about a book—for a week or so, and then it is time for the next one. In the land of the small press it is a little different: the excitement is in the book, the belief is in the book. It is a feeling of possession, of risk.

Thomas McGonigle lives in New York City.

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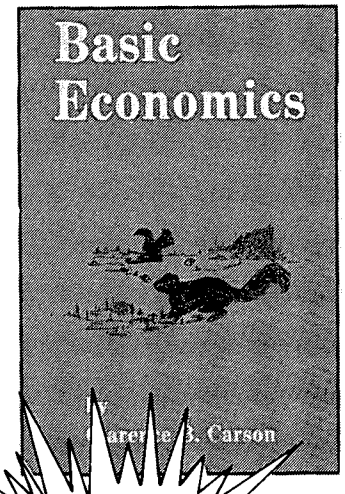

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